

Crossing the Gate

EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN
IN SONG FUJIAN (960–1279)



MAN XU

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Crossing the Gate

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Roger T. Ames, editor

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PRESS

Cover art: Golden silk wide sleeves robe (1235 AD). The garment is a dress for a female, excavated from a tomb sealed in 1235 and found by archaeologists in 1986 in the suburb of Fuzhou. The garment is at the Fujian Museum. Courtesy of The Fujian Museum.

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To my parents

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Acknowledgments

Eighteen years ago, when I was a junior in the History Department at Beijing University, Professor Deng Xiaonan opened a new course on Women in Tang and Song China. It was the first curriculum on women in pre-modern China available in Chinese universities, and it proved to be a fascinating experiment. The class introduced exciting new perspectives to conduct research on Chinese history and exposed me to the pioneering disciplines of women's history and gender studies. It was in her class that I started to touch on primary sources about women in Chinese history. The narratives are scattered and fragmentary and are generally absent from official histories that I had been reading. They appeared unusual, while at the same time interestingly familiar. I was deeply moved by the biographies of women from more than one millennium ago, which surprisingly resonated with my knowledge of the life experience of my grandmothers and mother. It inspired me to seek women's history that was largely invisible in historical records. Professor Deng offered me hands-on instruction on searching for and analyzing first-hand materials. Meanwhile, she gave me an inclusive reading list of influential books on women's history in pre-modern China that American scholars had published in the 1990s. She generously lent me her collection, considering research books on humanities in English were not easily accessible at that time. Immersed in the scholarship, I was astonished at how thriving and productive this field had been in Western academia. In 2001, as the secretary of the "International Symposium on

Tang and Song Women's History," I invited dozens of international leading scholars in Chinese women's studies to Beijing University, including Susan Mann, Patricia Ebrey, Dorothy Ko, Beverly Bossler, and Bettine Birge. I was thrilled to meet with these well-known authors and to communicate with them in person, and I was encouraged to further my interest in women's history in the United States.

In the fall of 2002, I joined Columbia University and achieved the good fortune of being assigned to two dedicated advisors—Robert Hymes and Dorothy Ko. At our first meeting, Robert Hymes gifted me his newly published book *Way and Byway*, which was awarded the Joseph Levenson Book Prize two years later. As a prestigious social historian, he appreciated my interest in local history and shared with me his research experience in the field and his insightful knowledge of women's history. Dorothy Ko, in spite of her early devotion to literary history, developed great enthusiasm for cultural studies. By taking her courses and working as her research assistant, I was impressed with the glamour of material culture and was eager to apply it to my research. In addition to the two advisors, my dissertation was greatly indebted to a number of China historians at Columbia. Robert Harrist taught me the methodologies of art history, JaHyun Haboush and Wei Shang trained me in recovering history with literary sources, Feng Li led me to understand the value of archaeological discoveries, and Conrad Schirokauer conveyed to me the wisdom in deciphering intellectual history. Inspired by these experts from a wide range of fields, I adopted a distinctive interdisciplinary approach to conducting my research.

Whether we can contextualize women's studies in local history largely depends upon the scope of available sources. A brief investigation of women's records limited my choice to a few economically and culturally advanced areas in the Song. Fujian stood out to me because of its exceptional wealth of original material that remained largely unexplored. I had started to collect historical sources for my research for the writing of my master's thesis, and I continued to expand my source pool for my dissertation. I explored sources available at Beijing University (China), Columbia University, the Library of Congress, Harvard University, Tokyo University (Japan) and the Oriental Library (Japan) and received great help from their librarians. Also, the CLIR Mellon Fellowship supported my field trips to Fujian libraries and museums. At the Fujian Provincial Museum, I met with some experienced local archaeologists and was offered special permission to visit their archive center. In the bulky old-style cabinets, I saw piles of discolored folders that were sealed in

the 1960s and 1970s and had never been opened since. They were like treasure boxes and revealed to me the devotion of a group of local archaeologists in the chaotic period of the Cultural Revolution. I made a wish to present their contributions to a broad audience by getting my work published, and I am glad it is coming true.

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Finally, I want to give my deepest thanks to my family. My parents know little about academia, and my husband, Xiang Zhou, is an engineer. But their passion for my work never declines. I greatly appreciate their

unconditional confidence in and unfailing support of my career pursuit. My son, Harry, was born when I was finishing my dissertation. And now that this book has been published, the entire family is enjoying the arrival of his younger sister, Alice. This book is like my third baby. It epitomizes the historical research that I have conducted in the past twenty years, and at the same time it heralds the beginning of my new experiments in examining middle-period Chinese history.

Introduction

The jurisdiction of the Circuit of Fujian overlaps with those of the ancient kingdoms of *Min* and *Yue*. It reaches the ocean in southeast, and borders the Circuit of West Jiangnan with abundant steep mountains in northwest. The warlords of the Wang family occupied it for fifty years, and divided it into three parts. In the early Song, all three were reincorporated into the imperial realm.¹ The land yields plentiful silver, copper, textiles, tea, salt, and seafood. People live and work satisfactorily on their land. Rivers irrigate fecund farmlands, and people have no worries about famine. Nevertheless, cultivatable lands are limited, while the registered population booms. The farmlands are fertile, but have been exploited. The land price skyrockets, drawing people easily into lawsuits. Local residents customarily believe in ghosts and respect sacrifices, and care about Buddhist teachings, which is similar to the customs of the Circuits of Jiangnan and Zhejiang. However, people appreciate education and learning, favor lecturing and discussion, and do well in literary production. Candidates who passed civil service examinations are extraordinarily numerous.

福建路，蓋古閩越之地。其地東南際海，西北多峻嶺抵江。王氏竊據垂五十年，三分其地。宋初，盡復之。有銀、銅、葛越之產，茶、鹽、海物之饒。民安土樂業，川源浸灌，田疇膏沃，無凶年之憂。而土地迫陋，生

籍繁夥；雖礪确之地，耕耨殆盡，畝直寢貴，故多田訟。其俗信鬼尚祀，重浮屠之教，與江南、二浙略同；然多嚮學，喜講誦，好為文辭，登科第者尤多。²

In the year 960, a military governor reunified China under the name Song and inherited the capital of Kaifeng from its Five Dynasties predecessors, who had based their rule in the North China plain. About 1,000 miles from the political center, on the southeastern edge of the empire, lay the Fujian Circuit³—a remote and underdeveloped frontier region in the eyes of early Song emperors. Surprisingly, its economy and culture advanced quickly and it emerged as a new force during the Song dynasty. In 1127, the North China plain was conquered by the nomadic Jurchens, which signaled the start of a new period in Song history: the Southern Song. The court abandoned Kaifeng and moved to Hangzhou to maintain its control of South China. Fujian was not involved in the wars and disturbances, and the relocation of the capital shortened the distance between Fujian and the central government and enhanced its political and military significance. Hundreds of imperial clan refugees who were raised in the lap of luxury in Kaifeng rushed to Fujian. They impressed the local populace with fashions from the old capital and started to adjust to the local customs. Moreover, the flow of a large number of migrants from the north brought Fujian new human, technical, and economic resources, which considerably contributed to its prosperity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The geographic variations in Fujian allowed diversified development of the different regions. The Fujian Circuit consisted of one prominent prefecture (*fu* 府), Jianning 建寧;⁴ five prefectures (*zhou* 州), Fuzhou 福州, Quanzhou 泉州, Zhangzhou 漳州, Nanjianzhou 南劍州, and Tingzhou 汀州; and two commanderies (*jun* 軍), Xinghua 興化 and Shaowu 邵武 (see Map 1). Fuzhou, Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, and Xinghua constituted the coastal zone and were labeled the “lowland four prefectures.” The rich land and ocean resources, as well as numerous immigrants from North China, had fueled their rapid rise since the ninth century. In contrast, mountains dominated the “highland four prefectures,” Jianzhou, Nanjianzhou, Shaowu, and Tingzhou. The relative shortage of natural resources and transportation networks postponed their agricultural development by about one century, compared to the low country. However, the economic disadvantages did not necessarily result in unfavorable culture. The deficiency seems to have stimulated unusual enthusiasm for education, which provided opportunities other than farming, crafting, and trading and promised a better future. Inter-



MAP I. Fujian Circuit in the Southern Song dynasty.

estingly, the distant mountainous Jianyang county, in the northern hinterland, became one of the most productive printing and book trading centers of the Song empire in the eleventh century.⁵ It made affordable reading materials widely available throughout Fujian and beyond.

Yasuhiro Satake's and Hugh Clark's analyses of the data on Song Fujian candidates in civil service examinations have demonstrated their unparalleled success in nationwide competitions.⁶ Among these local elites there arose a large number of neo-Confucians, including Master Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), whose ideas gradually became the orthodox ideology for the duration of late imperial Chinese history.⁷ Zhu Xi was born in Youxi 尤溪, county of Nanjianzhou, in 1130 when his father Zhu Song 朱松 (1097–1143) sought official employment in Fujian as a sojourner. Upon his father's death in 1143, Zhu Xi and his mother moved to Chong'an 崇安, county of Jianzhou, and were taken care of by his father's friend Liu Ziyu 劉子羽 (1096–1146). Zhu Xi developed a deep affection for his second hometown. Observing the beautiful and mysterious Mount Wuyi 武夷山, near which he lived, may have inspired his thoughts on nature and cosmology. His education there, as well as the intimacy he cultivated with the Liu family, introduced him to the circle of neo-Confucians and had a significant impact on his career as an official, a scholar, and an educator. In addition, his daily interactions with his mother, Liu Ziyu's wife, his wife,⁸ and undoubtedly many other local females shaped his perception of women and family, which he later integrated into his manual for family rituals and the women's epitaphs he composed.

At the age of eighteen, Zhu Xi passed the imperial civil service examination, and his political journey started when he obtained the post of magistrate in Tong'an 同安, county of Quanzhou, three years later. During his nine-year official employment, he worried about people's ignorance of morality and spared no effort to better local customs, but he never forcefully intervened in the private and family affairs of men or women. Zhu Xi displayed more interest in scholarship than in his civil posts, and he pursued it as a lifelong enterprise. He traveled and lectured to a great number of Fujian disciples in Jianning, Fuzhou, Quanzhou, and Zhangzhou. As an enlightening instructor, he explained abstract metaphysics to them, discussed treacherous politics with them, and accompanied them to local scenic sites and left a few inscriptions. And also, as a caring and compassionate mentor, he listened to their frustrations and complaints and offered them practical advice on how to cope with women in their families. These students were the forefathers of Song Fujian neo-Confucians, contributed to the flourishing of neo-Confucianism in a region distant from its origin, and helped disseminate Zhu Xi's thoughts and reputation across the empire in the thirteenth century.

One author who lived one millennium ago may have left us plentiful women-related written sources in a wide range of generic styles like Zhu Xi did. Song women, whom we see in Zhu Xi's family ritual manual, funerary inscriptions, personal letters, recorded and compiled conversations with disciples, and official posters, resemble each other in some respects but are by no means the same. Genres largely shape the content of writing and endow female protagonists with varied and even contradictory features. They present us with various perspectives from which to approach the "truth" of women in history by taking into account the diversity of generic conventions.

Lack of sources has been considered a serious problem for scholars studying Chinese women's history. Social historians have pointed out that the sources concerning women's lives are scattered and fragmentary. Although Ming-Qing scholars enjoy a wealth of women's writings, historians of the Song dynasty must commit themselves to an exhaustive search of the widest possible range of surviving sources—including the standard histories, government document collections, the Song legal code, descriptions of local customs, epitaphs, collections of miscellaneous notes and anecdotes, poetry, and paintings. To investigate women's everyday lives, I pay attention to all the sources that give hints of the movement and activities of women from all status groups. To learn about the orthodox ideology ostensibly regulating women, I turn to Confucian classics and family instruction manuals; to imagine individual women's life courses, I turn to poetry, biographies, epitaphs, and genealogies; to discover women's participation in community events and state governance, I turn to local gazetteers, village contracts, anecdotes, legal case collections, and stone inscriptions. These sources have a variety of concerns and present multiple aspects of women's experience, which variously complement and conflict with each other. Inconsistency between texts actually poses questions that are both historical and historiographic.

Except for a few literary works created by Song women, all the existing written material is the work of elite men. Beverly Bossler, in her most recent book, *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity*, has pointed out this nature of the sources. Given that, her book "is more about men's writing about women than it is about the experiences of women themselves."⁹ In contrast, my book, besides discussing elite men's views of women, spends more effort on exploring women's life experiences and agency. Male writers naturally projected their own gender ideology into their narratives of women's life or adjusted women's images to conform to literary genres. Taking authorship into consideration

prohibits me from recovering “absolute” historical fact, but it provides me with a valuable perspective from which to investigate male elites’ attitudes toward women’s mobility. At the same time, in these primary texts, male elites not only constructed images of their world intentionally; they also left evidence behind by accident. Distinguishing the latter can contribute to our knowledge of social reality, including women’s everyday experience in the Song dynasty.

Fujian’s prosperity in education, examinations, and culture elevated a local society that possessed a large number of elite families and built a tolerant atmosphere for women’s agency, but it also left us plentiful material sources that uncover women’s life experience, in addition to written texts. This book examines textual documents of material artifacts related to women as well as archeological reports recording objects that once were part of their life experience, and it significantly expands our available corpus of Song artifacts already preserved in museum collections and elsewhere.

Material artifacts related to women fall into two categories: the things that made women and the things women made. In the first category, house structure, inner chambers, furniture, bathing houses, and women’s daily utensils were all powerful material media of indoctrination. They shaped women’s bodily habits and thus contributed to the construction of gender. As for the second category, women created varied and materially powerful products, such as cooked food, clothing, embroidery, painting, calligraphy, and sutra transcriptions. No matter their class identity, the transmission of these wide-ranging cultural materials may be seen as an extension of women’s space, regardless of female bodies’ physical presence or absence. Most studies of Song women focus on those from elite families because textual material about women from the lower classes is scarce. By using material sources as a compensation for the limitations of written texts, this book covers both commoner women and elite women to present a relatively inclusive picture of women’s everyday lives in the Song dynasty.

Besides seeking to decode materials directly related to women’s experience in life, this book adopts a new approach in the study of women’s material culture by investigating objects from the underground world of the afterlife. In October 1975, when the Cultural Revolution was about to end, exhausted Chinese archaeologists who were desperately protecting “old cultures” were informed of the discovery of an old stone tomb in the suburb of Fuzhou. The salvage excavation unveiled a three-chamber joint burial site for Zhao Yujun 趙與駿 (1222–1249)

and his two wives, which shed light on an incredibly fascinating aspect of material culture from the Song dynasty. In the tomb chamber of Huang Sheng 黃昇 (1226–1243), Zhao Yujun's first wife, archaeologists found 436 objects, including 201 garments, 153 pieces of silk textiles, 48 cosmetic accessories, 25 copper coins, one epitaph, one land contract, and other items.¹⁰ The large collection of exquisite products made of silk, wood, and metal vividly presents the transient but extravagant life of a young woman from a Fujian official family whose wardrobe defied the sumptuary laws.

Huang Sheng's father, Huang Pu 黃樸, and Zhao Yujun's grandfather, Zhao Shishu¹¹ 趙師恕, decided on their marriage because of the classmate friendship the two patriarchs developed when studying neo-Confucianism under the tutorship of Huang Gan 黃幹 (1152–1221), a determined adherent and son-in-law of Zhu Xi. Huang Sheng died within one year of the wedding. Zhao Shishu composed her funerary inscription with unrestrained sorrow and knew some of the details of her burial. A large portion of Huang Sheng's funerary wealth was the dowries presented by her father, who was a supervisor of foreign trade in Quanzhou, while other items were offered by the Zhao family, who were royal relatives and were supplied with textiles manufactured in imperial workshops.

Interestingly, the intense neo-Confucian family atmosphere and connection, the royal background, the numerous exquisite garments, the fondness of a daughter and granddaughter-in-law, the respect for a granddaughter-in-law's private property, the wish for a woman's abundant afterlife, the violation of sumptuary laws—all these seemingly incompatible themes coexisted harmoniously in this seventeen-year-old young woman's tomb and had been sealed underground for more than seven centuries. Gender scholars have overthrown the stereotype of victimized women that Chinese elite men created in the early twentieth century, and archaeologists are no longer guided by the political agenda that characterized Chinese scholarship in the 1970s. We are able to reconstruct and understand a Song woman's life experience in a more critical way on the basis of a comprehensive reexamination of transmitted texts and material relics.

Women and Confucianism

Chinese historians who study women and gender from ancient times to the twentieth century treat “women and Confucian cultures in

pre-modern China”¹² as a core issue, and they have presented various ways to understand women “under Confucian eyes.”¹³ Early Confucian classics prescribe strict gender segregation in physical and functional terms. The canonical statement “men should manage the outside; women manage the inside” was reiterated by Confucian revivalists in the Song dynasty for the sake of reconstructing an orderly society after the tumultuous Five Dynasties era. Although recent scholarship has largely explored the complexity of women’s lives in the inner quarters in the Song period, in reality there was never a unified and dominant ideology of female seclusion or confinement at that time. The fact that gender segregation was devised by men but practiced by women suggests the unstated but unavoidable interaction and communication between men and women, which ironically challenged the principle itself. Song elite men, including determined neo-Confucians who were described as stubborn and dogmatic in later history, appeared flexible and pragmatic in dealing with women in real life. They were respectful of the gender ideals in the early prescriptive literatures, but their attitudes toward women depended more on their personal experience with them. The family was the initial place for people’s socialization, men and women alike. The feelings men developed for female family members in everyday life—respect for mothers, intimacy toward wives, care for sisters, and adornment of daughters—complicated Confucian understanding of domesticity. Elite men were emotionally attached to women living in the same compound and thus were not fully committed to strict gender segregation. Moreover, their compassion for female relatives seems to have spread to a broader context when they wrote epitaphs for their associates’ family members, composed biographies for women living in the neighborhood, and dealt with unknown women’s issues under their administration if they were officials. At the same time, witnessing women playing unorthodox roles in a wide range of domains, Confucian moralists anxiously voiced their concerns and felt compelled to reiterate ancient principles. Frustrated with the mixed feelings, these scholars had to compromise and accepted the imperfect social reality. They recognized women’s domesticity, refrained from directly intervening in women’s affairs, and resorted to moral preaching and economic leverage to encourage women to pursue the appropriate way of living.

The records left by Song elite men suggest that no female individuals proclaimed themselves to be, or were counted as, Confucian scholars. What the Song Confucians propagated was a male-exclusive way, although they never failed to arrange space for women while envi-

sioning an ideally ordered society. They inherited the classical notions of recognizing women's key positions in the domestic setting and at the same time widely spreading an assumption of women's disadvantages in achieving moral perfection.¹⁴ Contextualized in a multicultural society, the everyday lives of people, whether men or women, were deeply entangled with various ideas and norms, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, popular religions, and local customs. Elite men did not make a special effort to accommodate women's needs and agency in the Confucian discourse, but their humane and practical concern for women led to their tolerance and even advocacy of women's endeavors to seek spiritual comfort and self-realization somewhere outside the dictionary of Confucianism. The fact that some literati did not intervene in women's religious practice in spite of their distinctive hostility against Buddhism and Daoism was a typical example.

In general, elite men accepted women's personal pursuits, recognized their agency inside and outside the family, and did not encourage direct interference in women's affairs regardless of their official or scholarly identities. Although we might have expected provisions for the afterlife to give them an ideal context in which to practice the traditional ideology of gender segregation and hierarchy, in fact, home-like tombs presented their more humanist attitudes toward equality, harmony, and communication between male and female. The strict inner-outer separation proposed in family precepts did not find a place in the Confucian discourse on afterlife and local practice.

Women in Song Local History

Founded on the rich scholarship in local history, the research of Robert Hymes proposes that the culture established by the scholars (a "*shih*-oriented culture") gradually overrode the "court-oriented culture" in a number of regions of the empire during the Northern Song-Southern Song transition.¹⁵ It explains the rise of a "localist turn" across the empire, a term Peter Bol employs to represent the social change that started in the eleventh century and persisted into late imperial China.¹⁶ In the process of self-identification and mutual recognition, elite men, whatever their ideological approaches and political claims, increasingly took up responsibilities for the construction of local society. The localist sensibility permeated multiple aspects of male literati's life experience and contributed to the formation of elite culture in late imperial China. Women were generally missing from such a picture, which had long

been envisioned as men's creation. Nevertheless, women were half of the population. Most of them lacked interregional networks and resources, which made the engagement in local affairs a significant part of their everyday life experience. Contextualizing women's studies in local history, which scholars have long ignored, enriches our understanding of women's consciousness and agency in local society.

Among the Song elite, a number of neo-Confucians, in Peter Bol's words, were pioneers in "inventing the idea of a local literati community."¹⁷ Interestingly, their promotion of "local voluntarism" did not exclude women's participation, although it did not target women. Neo-Confucians neither intended to recruit women into their group nor cared about their philosophical or political leanings. Thus they neither transmitted the learning of the Way to women nor expected them to fulfill what men accomplished in the public sphere. However, their active involvement in the construction of local community set models for local witnesses who aspired for self-realization and personal reputation, men and women alike. They, together with many men who had no obvious neo-Confucian inclination, applauded women's generosity in investing wealth in local welfare and recognized their occasional leadership in the construction of public projects. Their ambition of local betterment overrode the worries about women's property rights and autonomy, which they normally considered to be a threat to an orderly patriarchal society.¹⁸

Being institutionally deprived of privileges in the public domain, women lacked powerful resources to challenge men's dominance and authority outside the family. Their exertion of agency in the local community did not annoy Confucian moralists, as long as it served the goals and interests of Confucianism. Gender was always a secondary concern in comparison to others, such as class and age, in the Confucian discourse. When conflicts arose between different principles, gender ideal was very likely the first to be sacrificed in order to maintain the class hierarchy. As a result, elite men never anticipated a universal application of gender rules among women from various class backgrounds.

Fujian has traditionally been labeled a distinctive and coherent geocultural unit—*Min* 閩—in the discourse of Chinese local history.¹⁹ However, the great divergence in terms of geography, ecology, ethnicity, language, custom, economy, and culture has yielded abundant scholarship focusing on certain districts. Some Song dynasty historians treat South Fujian (*Minnan* 閩南, which includes Xinghua, Quanzhou, and Zhangzhou) as an "internally integrated region," to study its demography, kinship, networks, and commercial prosperity in maritime China.²⁰ And

some focus on the relatively remote and isolated North Fujian (*Minbei* 閩北, part of Jianyang, Shaowu, and Nanjianzhou), to scrutinize its thriving publishing industry and Confucian revival.²¹ The varied development modes, especially economic patterns in South and North Fujian, as well as the adequacy of relevant primary sources have made the investigation of the two subzones necessary and feasible. Nevertheless, considering the general shortage of Song women's sources, this book sets its scope in conformity with the existence of Fujian as an administrative district. Women appeared in Fujian in a wide range of ways—some were born there; some traveled there; some married there; and some died there. This book includes them all to maximize the complexity of women's everyday lives on this land. Although it is based on intensive research on a specific locality, the discovery of similar sources in other places convinces me that many of its conclusions can be applied to Song dynasty China as a whole.

Inner and Outer: Seeking Song Women Beyond the Gate

The flexible boundaries between inner and outer have been thoroughly investigated by scholars who study Ming-Qing women's history. Inspired by numerous literary outputs left by women, they focus on the production of gendered space in writing. Spatiality, in Ming-Qing gender scholars' words, "refers to the organizing notion of the inner quarters as the locus of gendered writing practices and the intellectual, imaginative, and social spaces that were produced within and beyond it."²² Through their writings, women in late imperial China "destabilized apparently fixed boundaries and exposed their permeability."²³ However, very few women's writings survive from the Song dynasty. Lacking primary sources to recover the female writing voice in this period, I adopt an alternative and more straightforward approach to present the flexibility of the inner/outer boundary by examining women's physical movement. This book shows that the "spatial movement from inner to outer, the crossing of boundaries between personal and social and public sphere," and "the historical enlargement or expansion of women's space"²⁴ that scholars have articulated were not merely executed by a few Ming-Qing elite women who could read and write. Such agency applied to all women, regardless of class and time period, throughout Chinese imperial history, although it was displayed in varied ways.

This book is structured according to the places where Song women appeared and traces them here and there to reveal their multidimensional

life details. Today in downtown Fuzhou, there is a historical site called “three lanes and seven avenues (*sanfang qixiang* 三坊七巷)” surrounded by modern skyscrapers. Although the extant structures are mostly Ming-Qing remnants, the layout of this site inherited its original design from the Song dynasty. The district is divided into multiple residential quarters by major streets. The gateways that mark the entrances to each quarter stand along the major avenues. Lanes run through these residential quarters, and individual houses line up along the lanes. Let us imagine what a local woman may have done here on a certain day about one millennium ago. She stepped out of the inner chamber, went through multiple gates in the house, crossed over the threshold at the main entrance, and met the neighbors residing in the same lane. She walked, took a sedan chair or a carriage, or rode a donkey toward the lane gate with or without companions, from where she could tell the direction of her destination. It could be the house of her associate, a scenic spot, a farm, a market, a public project construction site, a government court, a hot spring, a temple, a local festival, a graveyard, and so on. When she returned, she passed through the lane gate and subsequently the household gate before reentering the inner quarter. Although lane gates didn’t exist for female residences in the countryside, in a woman’s eyes, an individual house gate led to a broad world that she very likely was curious about no matter where she lived. For the majority of the Song women, family houses were their normal dwelling bases. But they more or less had chances to explore the outside sphere for a good number of reasons in their everyday lives.

To reconstruct Song women’s physical mobility, movement, and visibility from inner to outer, this book starts with the house gates that every woman was familiar with in her everyday life. The first chapter examines the multilayer gates that women crossed back and forth between the inner quarters and the outside domain. The exploration of the house gate, lane gate, middle gate, and gates that were named for mothers demonstrates how women negotiated between inner and outer, imprinting public structures with acknowledgments of personal merits, endowing private architecture with gendered meanings, while at the same time showcasing their dominance in the household.

Chapter 2 moves beyond the gates and reaches the open outside field. Women’s images that were either hidden inside transportation vehicles or openly visible on the street, as well as the material traces they left in public places, represent female sojourners’ temporary stays and movements on the road and reveal their mobility and limits.

No matter where they were, women were always agents, either active or reluctant, in the local community. The third chapter first analyzes the concept of inner affairs (*nei shi* 内事) and outer affairs (*wai shi* 外事), reinterpreted by Song male elite in their literature, and then proceeds to explain how women expanded their living space to the broader local society while they were expected to be, and indeed identified themselves as, responsible members of the household. In spite of women's more or less free movement inside and outside the household, they encountered certain forbidden areas that they could not penetrate in theory, for example, the state bureaucratic system. Nevertheless, the Song dynasty witnessed women's extensive interaction with the local government. Chapter 4 categorizes women into two groups according to their family background: elites and commoners. Women who lived in elite families sought to influence local administration through personal kinship ties, but they were also prone to be used to propagate local government's promotion of domestic morality. Women from commoner families, in contrast, were subordinated to the local government's administration, but they might also deliberately make contact with this local authority to claim rights that were supposed to be guaranteed by the state.

Song women enjoyed considerable freedom to frequent religious markets and demonstrate agency in striving for a gendered religious space, as chapter 5 shows. Many of them showed interest in various religious teachings. They practiced religious rituals personally and visited temples occasionally, and thus they contributed to the prosperity of religions as devoted transmitters, pilgrims, and patrons.

The book ends at women's final and common destination—tombs. Chapter 6 examines how Song dynasty contemporaries viewed women's place in the afterlife. Despite Confucian scholars' appreciation of gender segregation among the living, both textual and material evidence show that the increasingly hardened gender hierarchy did not carry over into the afterlife. Women's place in the afterlife was not a reflection of the hierarchies on earth but was a new construction.



Gates in and out of the *Jia*

The *jia* 家—at once house, home, and family—was the most important and the most inevitable place for women in their everyday life during the Song period. It was a woman's initial birthplace and normal dwelling place, and it was interpreted diversely by women throughout the course of their lives. As an architectural structure, the *jia* consisted of the walls, gates, thresholds, rooms with varied functions, furniture, utilities, and so on that made up the home. The cultural implications of this material equipment were internalized during women's socialization and thus shaped their habitus. As a social organization, the *jia* consisted of the family, within which women accomplished role assignments, accumulated identities and power, established social networks, and experienced both restriction and protection. The *jia* of the Song dynasty, considered both as house and as kin, never existed as an isolated unit: a house was surrounded by neighbors; a family was a continuity of vertical genealogy that was at the same time connected horizontally to both patrilineal and marital relatives residing elsewhere. The *jia* was thus a complicated concept with multiple implications for the women in it.¹ Its social connotations, such as family, home, and descent and kinship unit, were embodied in a physical entity—the house, which was actually the material shell of family life.

A house, as Jordan Sand interprets, is “a site, the shelter for a household, the bounds and the focus of a community” as well as “an artifact, a product of human manufacture, a material extension of its

occupants' lives."² It is also a powerful vehicle of socialization. In Francesca Bray's words, the architectural space "became a text, interweaving hegemonic Confucian social values with popular ideals into a strong and flexible fabric" in late imperial China.³ She visualizes a Chinese *jia* as a walled domain or "the wall around the house separat[ing] the inner from the outer world."⁴ In such a confinement, a variety of house compartments, including altar, stove, and bedroom, encoded patriarchy and defined women as men's dependents. However, the *jia* was never merely a combination of these stable structures with distinct functions. The flow of people, objects, and information inside the *jia* relied on a movable architectural component—the gate. In addition to the house gate, which "communicated between family and outside world" as Bray has briefly addressed, multiple gates inside the *jia* were crucial in facilitating the movement of family members from one location to another. The gates connoted mobility and fluidity inside the *jia* as well as between the *jia* and the outer sphere. Women must have experienced the gates in considerably different ways from their male cohabitants because of their divergent prescribed domestic roles. Layers of the gates, erected at the main entrance and scattered everywhere in the house, provided women with physical outlets to go outward, cross boundaries, and construct an expansive space that was not constrained by the inner quarters. Sympathetic to the way cultural historians view the house, I treat the gates of the *jia* as special "sites," "artifacts," and "texts" as well. In this chapter, I explore how these gates were related to women's everyday life and both female and male residents' movements in the house structures and how they were gendered in accordance with Confucian ideals in Song dynasty Fujian.

The House Gate (*Men* 門) and Lane Gate (*Lü* 閭)

In a traditional Chinese house structure, a wall, together with a gate, constituted a segregating artifact defining a certain *jia*'s sphere. A house gate not only was a part of the physical boundary separating a *jia* from the outside world; it also functioned as a special breakthrough point in this restricting circle. In contrast to a fixed wall, a gate could be opened and closed. Therefore, it became an important channel connecting inner and outer space and enabling the flow of human beings and objects between inner and outer. In a Song encyclopedia, the *Gujin hebi shilei beiyao* 古今合璧事類備要, a gate was understood in this way: "The construction of a gate was to segregate inner and outer, mediate coming-and-going, limit

entry-and-exit, and therefore it was opened or closed at [appropriate] times.”⁵ The study of the gate in traditional China demonstrates these dual functions of segregation and connection. As historian Liu Zenggui states, “The gate of a *jia* was not only the dividing line between a family and society, but also their connecting point.”⁶ Thus the space outside a *jia* was usually described as “[the space] outside the gate (*men wai* 門外).” And the existence of this term in Song texts also implies that Song people realized the importance of a house gate in the interaction between the inner *jia* and the outer society. Therefore, a gate is the first significant structure among all the house structures through which we may study how a *jia* was gendered.

Architecturally, the different designs and functions of house gates of the *jia* in the Song period depended, to a great extent, on their locations in the housing compound as well as residents’ social status and living situations.⁷ Because no gates of Song Fujian residences have survived, it is impossible to explore the process of design and manufacture of a gate and its accessories and thus inquire into the contemporary gender ideologies embodied in them, as scholars studying Ming-Qing history have been able to do.⁸ Fortunately, quite apart from the concrete visual material that no longer survives, texts inscribed on gates, recorded in abundant local gazetteers, also provide a precious perspective from which to understand how a house gate was gendered through the interaction between the family members within and people or institutions beyond (see Figure 1.1).

It is hard to find examples of characters indicating residents’ identities on the gates of civilian dwellings in the genre paintings of the Song period. However, in textual sources, there are plentiful narratives about the words attached to the gates of the *jia* celebrating the residents. In the Song, these textual titles were exclusively issued by the government, and this tradition, which represented a government’s authority, can be traced back to China’s early period.⁹ During the Song, such titles were related to the female residents of the *jia* in two ways. One was to indicate family members’ filial piety to female elders, and the other was to praise female residents’ womanly virtues.

Filial piety (*xiao* 孝) was a classical Confucian virtue widely appreciated by early Chinese thinkers.¹⁰ In conformity with the promotion of filial piety by the Song government, awarding plaques commending particular *jia* residents’ filial piety was a common convention conducted by local administrators. In Guangze County 光澤縣 of Shaowu Command 邵武軍, “Shangguan Chao’s 上官超 mother was sick to the point

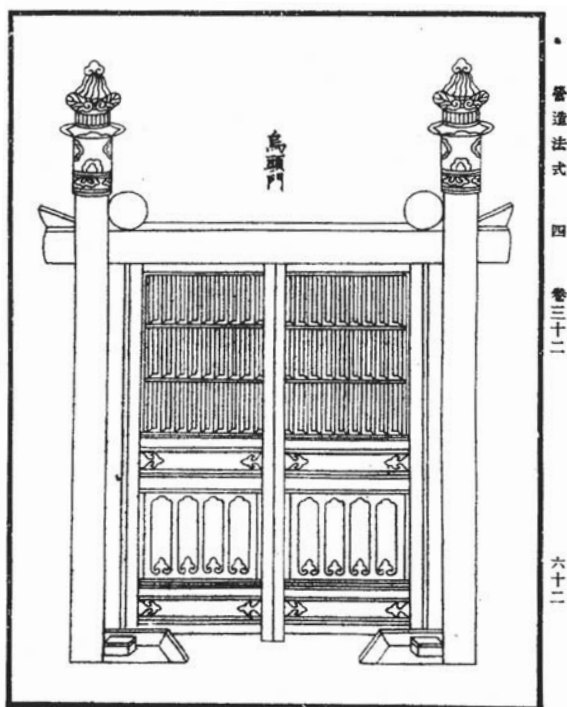


FIGURE 1.1. Illustration of a *wutou* gate in the *Yingzao fashi*.

of death. He cut his left rib, took out his liver, and cooked it to feed his mother. Subsequently, his mother recovered. Zhang Shuo 張碩, the county administrator [heard about it] and named the house gate with the title 'filial response (*xiao gan* 孝感).' Therefore the lane (*fang* 坊) where his house was located was named *xiao gan* too."¹¹ The *xiao gan* plaque was hung on the gate of Shangguan Chao's house because he behaved dramatically to express his filial piety to his mother. In this story, the mother was, of course, an essential precondition and contributed to the production of this gendered title of honor for her *jia*, although she did not play any active role in the events.

Apart from playing indispensable passive roles in the narratives justifying gate titles, women staying at home were also direct protagonists in expressing their agency, actively earning gate titles and achieving pride for their *jia*. Ms. Lü's 呂氏 case, in Jinjiang County 晉江縣 of Quanzhou Prefecture 泉州府, was quite similar to Shangguan Chao's story,

although it displayed a daughter's filial piety to a father rather than a son's to a mother. Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235), “the most outstanding . . . among the next generation of leaders” of Zhu Xi's (1130–1200) neo-Confucian school, according to Hoyt Tillman, served as the prefect of Quanzhou at the time.¹² He wrote an essay proclaiming Ms. Lü's filial piety and recorded the establishment of the Lane of Great Filial Piety (*Yi Xiao Fang* 懿孝坊) for her. Ms. Lü was eighteen years old when her father was sick to the point of death. She attended him carefully every day and night, but his condition did not improve. She could not find the reason for her father's illness and thought her father had gotten sick because her grandparents wanted him to follow them below. So she bowed to her grandparents' tablets, cried, and pleaded with them to let her substitute for her father to serve them. She cut a piece of flesh from her thigh and cooked it with porridge to feed to her father. He felt better the next day and totally recovered in ten days.¹³

Ms. Lü's filial behavior resembled Shangguan Chao's, to a great extent. The Lü family received a gate title similar to that of the Shangguan family because of Ms. Lü's filial activity in spite of her female identity. It is hard to tell the difference between the meanings of the two gate titles awarded to these two *jia* because both *xiao gan* and *yi xiao* are literally meritorious words celebrating filial piety. Thus there seems to be no gender discrimination between these two gate titles. In Song Fujian, house residents could gain reputation for a *jia* and recognition from the local government through their personal virtuous behavior regardless of gender. However, Zhen Dexiu's essay on *Yi Xiao Fang* endowed Ms. Lü's gate title with more complicated connotations from the author's neo-Confucian (*dao xue* 道學) perspective. Zhen Dexiu, renowned for political talents and scholarship, traveled across south China to assume official positions and practiced his neo-Confucian ideals at the local administrative level after 1215. By 1219, when he composed the *Yi Xiao Fang* essay, he had been recognized and respected as a representative of Zhu Xi's school.¹⁴ He employed a distinctive neo-Confucian language to stylize this essay, in accordance with his full commitment to Zhu Xi's ideology.

Ms. Lü stayed in the inner chamber, and never followed teachers or friends talking about learning. . . . [Her filial act] is not strange, because people, whether sages or idiots, all know that monarchs' and parents' bodies are more important than our own bodies. Someone loses the genuine [human] nature

when confused by human desires or afraid of disadvantage. Only those who are sincerely filial are pure in mind and wholehearted in consideration. Once they are pure in mind and wholehearted in consideration, their heaven is complete. Once their heaven is complete, their hearts are as a sage's hearts. Even a woman has been able to achieve this with one day's sincerity, not to mention a Confucian gentleman who pursues [*Dao*] all his life. [If a gentleman could be as sincere as Ms. Lü was,] nobody could prohibit him from entering the sages' world.¹⁵

Zhen Dexiu was one among the Song neo-Confucians who used "exemplar biography to proselytize the *Dao xue* message," according to Beverly Bossler.¹⁶ In his understanding, Ms. Lü was a Confucian scholar's daughter who preserved her real nature (*xing* 性) well. She achieved the ultimate Way (*Dao* 道) through her sincere performance, which originated from her pure heart (*xin* 心). The concepts of human nature, way, and heart are typical key words from the vocabulary of neo-Confucian metaphysics. He represented Ms. Lü, an illiterate female teenager who stayed in the inner chamber, as a subject exemplifying neo-Confucian philosophy and morality in order to encourage male scholars' pursuit of the Way. "While certainly intended to improve social morality in general," his allegory, as Bossler has found in many of his contemporaries' similar writings, was "not intended to promote female fidelity per se."¹⁷

Elite men celebrated both male and female paragons in considerable numbers, but gender discrimination was still discernable in many of their narratives. As Ms. Lü's story shows, Zhen Dexiu assumed women living in the inner quarters and men studying Confucianism to be located at unequal levels in the intellectual hierarchy, and he thus used women's moral examples to exhort male readers. Moreover, he manipulated female heroines' cases to praise male elite relatives—Ms. Lü's father, in this case. In contrast to Shangguan Chao's mother's passive image in local gazetteers, Ms. Lü's father was singled out for praise:

Ms. Lü's father is Lü Zhu, whose polite name is Luwang. His family has been endeavoring in Confucian learning generation after generation, and studying independently in spite of their poor situation. From his daughter [I am able to] know what kind of person he is.¹⁸

The virtuous girl Ms. Lü was advertised to the public and became a local celebrity because of the award she received from the government. Lü Zhu, a Confucian scholar and presumably a public figure, was hidden behind the scene as the beneficiary of his daughter's filial behavior. He performed no more active role in this story than Shangguan Chao's mother did in hers. Nevertheless, Zhen Dexiu seemed uneasy about presenting such a female-dominant scenario. In compensation for the loss of this elite man's agency, Zhen Dexiu, in the concluding remark, recorded his personal information and commended his morality, although Zhen very likely did not know much about him.

In the *Yi Xiao Fang* essay, although Ms. Lü played a leading role in the main plot, in Zhen's comments accompanying the story, elite men interested in self-cultivation and moral achievement were substituted for the female protagonist (through the example of her father) and became the subjects whom the author really cared about. He compared Ms. Lü's filial conduct with the ancient sage Duke Zhou's virtuous behavior, claiming "substituting oneself for others is the story of 'The Metal Box' (*jīn teng* 金藤)"¹⁹ and "her address in substituting herself for her father conforms to the meaning of 'The Metal Box.'" Furthermore, he justified his praise of Ms. Lü by drawing upon the literary tradition launched by Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), a predecessor who led the Ancient-Style Prose Movement²⁰ and contributed to the rise of the prototype of neo-Confucianism in the late Tang period.²¹

In the old days, Liu Zihou 柳子厚 [Zongyuan] wrote "The Inscription of the Filial Gate (*Xiaomen Ming* 孝門銘)," in which he said, "Filial emotion is great. How kind and gentle it is!" [Based on this literary authority], I think it is appropriate to award Ms. Lü with the title of "*yi xiao* (great filial piety)." Therefore, I have mounted the [great filial piety] tablet on Ms. Lü's gate.²²

The allusions to "The Metal Box" and "The Inscription of the Filial Gate" demonstrated the enduring power of the classical literary tradition, which excluded illiterate females. Judging from the usual pattern of the distribution of most Song essays, this essay might have initially circulated among Zhen Dexiu's individual social network, which included his colleagues and friends, then was propagated through publication, and thus finally was made available to the whole Song elite group. For fellow

officials, including those who did not know Zhen Dexiu personally or witness the granting of the *Yi Xiao Fang* title, this *Yi Xiao Fang* essay not only provided them with practical administrative strategies for seeking and awarding local paragons²³ but also led them to consider and deal with local affairs in neo-Confucian ways, an enterprise that he was personally committed to in addition to his sincere scholarly study of Zhu Xi's metaphysics.

As a local official and devoted Confucian scholar, Zhen Dexiu broadcasted Ms. Lü's story by textual dissemination as well as visual representation. The readership of his *Yi Xiao Fang* essay was rather different from the audiences who appreciated this physical *Yi Xiao Fang* title, and the social status of these audiences was intimately related to this title's physical location, the lane gate.²⁴ The reason that the local government put an honorable title on the lane gate instead of on Ms. Lü's house gate is probably related to the layout of a Song Fujian city. The words *fang* and *lù* in Zhen Dexiu's essay indicate that Ms. Lü lived in town, since *lane (fang 坊)* was an elementary residential district in a Song city's landscape and *lù* meant a lane gate. The collapse of the *fang* system in urban planning during the Tang-Song transition deprived lane gates of government supervision and official characteristics.²⁵ Standing at the entrances to residential wards, the lane gates in the Song were the physical extension of individual house gates and collective openings shared by a few *jia* in the same lanes. Historian Billy So has reconstructed the layout of lanes in Jinjiang county in the Song.²⁶ Although his map does not identify individual lanes, it shows a lane gate faced a main road connecting people in various districts in the city.²⁷ However, a house's gate opened on an alley inside a lane.²⁸ This meant that a plaque hung on a house gate was mostly visible to a group of people residing in a common lane, but a lane gate title's audience might have been all the city's residents and even passing travelers.²⁹ Attaching a glorious title to a lane gate definitely publicized an individual's virtue more effectively than attaching it to a house gate. Furthermore, Billy So's study of intraprefectural population distribution illustrates that among the Song cities, "the highest proportion of population in the prefectural capital in terms of total population of the prefectural capital county" was in Jinjiang, the capital county of Quanzhou prefecture 泉州府.³⁰ The unusually high concentration of population means that a lane gate title here would attract substantially more audience than in any other Song city, which might explain why many Quanzhou officials, such as Zhen Dexiu, made continuous effort to disseminate honorary titles to a large number of lanes.³¹ Therefore, in Ms. Lü's case, the woman's righteous deed inside her house gate was praised overtly by the local government

and became knowable to the public through the lane gate marked with an official brand. The lane gate, which was originally a geographic label identifying an urban residential district, was transformed under the local government's authority and functioned as a sign broadcasting a private woman's integrity.

Since her filial activity conformed to classical Confucian morality, Ms. Lü was on the one hand viewed by elite males as an example useful for promoting the literati's moral cultivation, and on the other hand recognized by the local government as a moral pioneer improving local custom through the modification of a public symbol. Zhen Dexiu thus played a double role in this *Yi Xiao Fang* event. He identified himself as a devoted neo-Confucian scholar in the creation of this *Yi Xiao Fang* essay and performed the role of a responsive and caring local administrator in the ceremony of awarding the *Yi Xiao Fang* title. The *jia* might have been a private place available for Ms. Lü herself to accomplish her agency; nevertheless, her active image was introduced beyond the *jia* and put under the public gaze through the male elite's deployment of textual and material resources.

Local governments commended virtuous figures conspicuously by awarding lane gate titles regardless of gender. In this way, women's classical virtues inside the *jia* could be represented by honorable public icons just as their male contemporaries' were. Thus the title of a lane gate might be altered depending on successive lane residents' virtuous feats, again without any discrimination by gender. An item in the gazetteer *Bamin tongzhi* 八閩通志 records the change of a lane gate title in Houguan County 侯官 during the Song-Yuan period. In the Song dynasty, a local resident, Liu Zao 劉藻, was famous because of his filial piety. The government awarded him food and clothing and named the lane where he lived "spreading the goodness (*xi lei* 錫類)." Later on, the title was changed to "great terrace for the nurturing of morality (*yuan tai yu de* 元臺育德)" because the great minister Yu Shen's 余深 former residence was here. In the Yuan dynasty, the governor of Fujian Province, Jia Ne 賈訥, and his widowed mother lived here, so the lane was renamed "the lane of chastity (*zhen jie fang* 貞節坊)" to promote her virtue.³² From *Xi Lei* to *Yuan Tai Yu De* and *Zhen Jie Fang*, this lane gate title was changed successively because of the appearance of virtuous or celebrated inhabitants in this lane, male and female. Although lane gate titles in Song Fujian experienced continuous transformation, they persisted as a public symbol that did not exclude females.

Besides the lane gate (*lü* 閭), the house gate (*men* 門) was also a common site where the titles issued by governments were attached.

Already in the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 we read that “all filial descendants, chaste and righteous women, all people who have donated money and saved sufferers, and all scholars who are moral models to commoners will be awarded inscribed tablets on their house gates (*bian biao qi men* 扁表其門) to promote their beneficent behavior.”³³ This convention was still practiced by the government in the Song period, and actually in Shangguan Chao’s case, the *xiao gan* title was placed on his *men*.³⁴

In Song Fujian, many women were granted house gate tablets by the local government. In addition to filial daughters like Ms. Lü, a number of chaste widows were also offered such honors.³⁵ In Putian County 莆田縣 of Xinghua Prefecture 興化府, a few examples of chaste widows were recorded in local gazetteers.³⁶ Ms. Xue’s 薛氏 husband died when she was eighteen. In order to avoid being forced by her parents to remarry, Xue painted her body with lacquer. The county administrator, Sun Fengji 孫逢吉, conferred a house gate tablet upon her bearing the title “chastity, righteousness and dusky brightness (*jie yi you guang* 節義幽光).”³⁷ Ms. Huang 黃氏, also a young widow, swore that she would live as Fang’s wife and die as a ghost of the Fang family. The county administrator, Xu Shichang 許世昌, awarded her an inscribed house gate tablet.³⁸ Another teenage widow, Ms. Fang 方氏, hanged herself after months of crying. Zheng Zizhuang 鄭子莊, an Erudite of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*Taichang boshi* 太常博士) described her story and reported it to the local government. The county administrator, Zhu An 朱安, granted her an inscribed house gate tablet to praise her virtue.³⁹ These women were all awarded house gate tablets as chaste widows without children, but the concrete locations of the tablets are not clear in the narratives. In Ms. Xue’s case, it is possible that Ms. Xue lived with her parents after her husband died, while her parents considered remarrying her, and the *jie yi you guang* tablet might have been sent to the house gate of her natal family. In Ms. Huang’s case, she must have stayed at her husband’s *jia* because she decided to be a member of the Fang family no matter whether she lived or died. And in Ms. Fang’s case, it seems that she committed suicide in her husband’s *jia*, as she cried over her husband’s death day and night. Therefore, the two house gate tablets praising Ms. Huang and Ms. Fang should have been awarded to their husbands’ families. Although Confucian scholars expected widows to stay with their husbands’ families in accordance with patrilineal and patrilocal principles, many Song widows turned to their natal families for support and still preserved their chastity in people’s eyes.⁴⁰ It seems that the demonstrations of women’s chastity

included their emotional or physical commitment to the deceased husbands' households. Thus, some honorary tablets conferred on chaste widows were hung on their natal families' house gates because of their female subjects' physical return home.

Situated within a specific Song *jia*, a woman was endowed with multiple identities—daughter, sister, wife, mother, and mother-in-law—depending on who was the male household head. She was normally a dependent family member, although she could become a household head under certain circumstances.⁴¹ However, even if her legal status was a dependent, she could earn prestige for the *jia* where she lived insofar as she practiced specific common or female-exclusive virtues such as filial piety or chastity in that *jia*.⁴² When the local government awarded a house gate tablet to a woman, the tablet itself was an object displaying a *jia*'s honor, while the text inscribed on the tablet was a record of the woman's experience related to human relations inside the house. The Song government's promotion of Confucian virtues using house gate tablets provided women with official channels through which to display moral achievement. In this way, women were empowered to go beyond the *jia* boundary in name without leaving the house in person, and they became recognized and admired by nonkin as representatives of their *jia* although they were not the household heads.

Beverly Bossler and Mark Elvin investigate the detailed processes of identifying and rewarding moral exemplars by the state from the Song to the Qing. They make it clear that the reports of the awardees' righteous deeds were sent to and reviewed by the local officials at the county, prefecture, and circuit/province levels consecutively, and finally arrived in the imperial court and were approved by the emperor.⁴³ And thus the state awarding agendas were substantially influenced by emperors' personal inclinations and court politics.⁴⁴ The institutionalization of state awards left us abundant and sometimes even overwhelming evidence in official histories. Nevertheless, it was never the full picture of the government awards that normal people witnessed and experienced in middle period and late imperial China. Contextualized in Song Fujian, few awardees were recorded in official histories.⁴⁵ However, plentiful Ming-Qing local sources inform us that Fujian, like many other districts, yielded a large number of recipients of government awards despite the fact that few Song local gazetteers survive. The incompleteness of the court archives might partly explain the shocking disparity between state records and local narratives. But the major reason that official histories failed to include hundreds of moral examples that local gazetteers

preserved is that these awardees mostly received prizes from local administrators rather than the central government.⁴⁶

In addition to the honors authorized by the state, many more awards were presumably offered directly by local administrators without being processed by the central bureaus because officials at the prefecture level had the authority to issue similar awards to outstanding moral exemplars who were residents in their administrative districts. Song Fujian officials, such as Zhu Xi and Zhen Dexiu, claimed such a right/responsibility when they were prefects.⁴⁷ If we distribute the fewer than 200 awardees recorded in official histories between the more than 200 prefectures, one prefecture produced at most one awardee on average in the 300 years of the Song history. The Song people thus rarely had a chance to see or hear about state awarding, which actually contradicted the court's intention to use such examples to improve morality. In comparison to tedious applications for state awards, the process of local awards was less demanding while being more efficient and productive. And the examples I have discussed above are all paragons who were awarded by local government. The dual system of government awards (state/local government) for virtue survived the dynastic transitions from the Song to the Yuan, Ming, and Qing, which gave rise to numerous gates and gate accessories that deeply engaged women in the political discourse of local administration.

Different from the local practice of applying inscribed tablets on existing house and lane gates, the Song court inherited the practice of the Tang and ordered additional gates to be erected in the *chuoxie* 綽楔 style to signify moral paragons in an unusual way. These gates were located in front of the recipients' house gates, supported by red and white square bases, taller and more elaborate than the house gates.⁴⁸ Although visually more impressive than attaching tablets, the construction of *chuoxie* gates was costly and time consuming. The records of the construction of such gates are occasionally available in some Song local gazetteers. And the gazetteer authors and the officials involved in these cases all suggested the unusual grandeur of the awards. It may explain why local officials would award inscribed plaques rather than spend limited financial and labor resources on constructing elaborate gates for the sake of moral propaganda.

Chuoxie gates were seldom built in Song Fujian. I have found merely one such gate for a woman. According to a local gazetteer published in 1554, a certain Northern Song woman, Ms. Liao 廖氏, who lived in Chonghua village district (*Chonghua li* 崇化里) of Jianyang county, was known by the magistrate because of her chastity and her sons' achievements under her supervision. The case was filed upward to the central

government and unfortunately not approved. Not following a normal administrative procedure, a *Hanlin* academician 翰林學士 reported the case to Emperor Renzong 仁宗 at a court banquet. The emperor was impressed by such an exemplary case from “the distant *Min* (Fujian) district,” and praised and awarded Ms. Liao and her family. A memorial gate of chastity was established in the local book market to publicize her virtue.⁴⁹ In the emperor’s and statesmen’s eyes, Fujian in the early eleventh century was a less-developed region far removed from the political and cultural center of the empire, which made its local paragons’ cases especially rare, precious, and praiseworthy. Such an unfavorable impression was revised as Jianyang soon rose to be one of the three most famous printing and publishing centers of the Song empire. Lucille Chia’s study of the development of the Jianyang book trade shows print shops becoming common in Ms. Liao’s hometown in the late Southern Song or Yuan.⁵⁰ Although it was not as prosperous during Emperor Renzong’s reign (1022–1063) as it was in later periods, the book market there must have been a thriving cultural and commercial center at that time, predicting its subsequent rapid growth in the second half of the eleventh century. In conformity with the standardization of *chuoxie* gates, Ms. Liao’s dwelling must have been located inside the book market, which makes me suspect that her family was engaged in book printing or selling. In this mid-Ming text, we do not see the standard words of *jingbiao* 旌表 and *men lü* 門閭, which were usually used by Song narrators to describe state awards in official rhetoric. The Ming author recorded the Song government’s awarding activity as “erecting a memorial arch of chastity (*shu zhenjie fang* 樹貞節坊),” which actually suggests people’s knowledge of commemorative gates in the sixteenth century had substantially departed from their Song ancestors’.

Although the erection of an extra gate as an award to a local model very likely presented an extreme honor in the Song period, the memorial arches were ubiquitously built across the empire by the later Ming-Qing governments. The *chuoxie* gates evolved into the memorial arches (*paifang* 牌坊) prevalent in late imperial China.⁵¹ The term *paifang* is frequently found in Ming-Qing documents in spite of its absence in historical sources by the Yuan dynasty. The Ming-Qing state deviated from the Song practice by establishing monuments on bustling thoroughfares—so-called *tongqu dalu* 通衢大路—as a number of imperial edicts show.⁵² Moreover, local administrators received subsidies from the state to cover the cost.⁵³ It is unclear when the departure of memorial gates from the *jia* started,⁵⁴ but the separation of house gates and

memorial arches suggests that the Ming-Qing imperial courts targeted a considerably broader audience in improving morality than the Song. Standing independently at a public space away from the awardees' *jia*, these state-sponsored Ming-Qing monuments substituted for the Song *chuoxie* gates in terms of commemorative function. But at the same time, they lost the physical connection that *chuoxie* gates and lane gates had with the *jia*⁵⁵ and downplayed moral exemplars' individuality and family identity. The central government presented a variety of virtues to an open public, demonstrating its ultimate authority in recognizing an individual's morality and value regardless of gender. In the eyes of most audiences, who were illiterate and did not recognize the inscribed texts, these monuments to either men or women represented the glory of the local communities—cities, towns, or villages. In contrast to the enhanced emphasis on women's domesticity in late imperial China, their symbolic bond with the *jia* was interestingly released to serve the state's penetrating power in controlling local affairs as well as its burgeoning interest in institutionalizing local regulations.

While originally *jia*-attached memorial arches increasingly rose in the public space, the tradition of granting house gate tablets was not abandoned by local officials in late imperial China. Siyen Fei's study of local awards for women in the Ming dynasty shows that offering house gate plaques was routine. It represented official recognition and encouragement, helped promote the cult of widow fidelity, and supplemented state awards efficiently.⁵⁶ This conventional strategy was inherited by the Qing government as well. However, it was referred to as an old tradition in imperial rhetoric, and local magistrates were instructed to apply it to "average chaste widows (*xunchang jiefu* 尋常節婦)" with the sanction of provincial governors.⁵⁷ The number of female paragons who received state awards in the Qing was enormously higher than in previous dynasties.⁵⁸ Power hierarchy in the dual awarding mechanism was intensified. The state encroached on local officials' authority by awarding a large number of individuals who should have been offered local honors under the previous awarding system. State awards, which were intensively characterized by the granting of memorial arches, became increasingly pervasive and desirable from the eighteenth century on. Obviously, the ubiquitous construction of state-approved memorial arches had considerable weight compared to the endowment of honorary plaques, and the proliferation of monuments reduced the latter to a minor honor unworthy of special attention. In sum, contextualized in the development of government awards for virtue from the middle period to late imperial China, the

allocation and negotiation of power between the state and the locality fluctuated. In the Song era, state awards were scarce, and local officials took the initiative in offering the valuable awards that average people might see, experience, and expect. Accompanying the institutionalization of state awards for virtue from the Yuan dynasty on, local awards assumed auxiliary roles and were gradually reduced to subordinate status.

Song local administrators monopolized local awards, and they exerted more autonomy in managing local issues, including moral education, than the Ming-Qing civil servants. Their criteria in evaluating and strategies in recognizing moral exemplars may have varied. Even one official could be inconsistent on different posts. Zhen Dexiu, for example, was active in renaming lane gates for moral paragons in Quanzhou, but he did not leave us any such records while he was assigned to govern Fuzhou fifteen years later. When dealing with a certain case, Song officials were not subject to any consistent state decrees as their Ming-Qing counterparts were. They had the full authority to decide on whether a paragon deserved a house gate tablet, a lane gate plaque, material/monetary subsidy, exemption from conscript labor, or an application for state award, which rendered the distribution of moral models random and unbalanced in Song Fujian.

During the Song period, using a house gate tablet to identify or celebrate one's own *jia* was not a popular practice among commoners. Gate tablets for buildings were normally installed by governmental bureaus. Therefore, an inscribed tablet on a commoner's house gate likewise reminded its viewers of governmental authority. Unlike government bureaus' gate tablets, the words inscribed on a house gate tablet were mostly magnificent characters related to some Confucian virtues. Local governments were the unique conventional providers of such tablets, which not only presented particular residents' good deeds but indicated the governments' orthodox authority of confirming an individual's virtue. Objects inscribed with honorary titles were sent to the recipients' *jias* with pomp and ceremony by local government officials. After the celebrations ended, props such as flags, horses, drums, and fans were returned to the government offices, while honorary titles remained on the gates to remind passersby of the *jias*' glory.⁵⁹

As powerful physical symbols of women's domestic virtues, these house or lane gates displayed government authorities' recognition of women's moral superiority and functioned as a barrier protecting their reputation. However, at the same time, the plaques exerted official and popular pressure on women and overshadowed their domestic life, in

spite of the government's noninterference in the *jia*. A house gate, as one of the most visible boundaries between inner and outer as well as private and public, was erected by an individual household to ensure the relative independence of its space and prevent intervention from outside the *jia*. This physical demarcating object, although usually respected, was subordinated to the government authority's modification (by attaching an inscribed plaque) or occasional reconstruction (by adding a symbolic and elaborate *chuoxie* gate) under the name of awards and improvement of customs. A house gate thus transformed from a private architecture to a public icon evidenced the ubiquitous existence of government power and brought the *jia* members living behind the gate prestige and benefits that they appreciated and welcomed. As I have stated before, the gate was the only opening in a house structure and possessed dual functions—separation and communication. Women were supposed to stay inside the *jia* and to spend most of their lifetime behind house gates. As a nuisance representing the power of the state as well as a welcome statement of prestige, an honorary tablet located on a house gate that was bestowed on a woman implied the government's intention to penetrate into this *jia* area, a relatively independent entity defined and protected by a wall, and influence the everyday life of the female residents living inside.

The Middle Gate (*Zhong Men* 中門)

Through the discussion of the gate (*men*), we now know how a main gate worked as an object in a paradoxical way: while separating women inside the *jia* from the outside, it also connected them to the local community and government. In order to understand how an interior house structure was gendered, let us imagine entering one. When we enter the *men*, close the main gate, and follow women into the narrower confines of the *jia* area, we inevitably encounter another gate—the middle gate (*zhong men*). It is important to recognize that it had the same dual function as the outer gate did. Literally, *zhong men* means “the gate in the middle.”⁶⁰ In ancient classics such as the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhou li* 周禮) and *Ceremonies and Rites* (*Yi li* 儀禮), it is termed *the middle gate* because of its relative middle position among a set of gates dividing the space of palace architectures.⁶¹ Although invisible in prescriptive literature and ritual manuals, the middle gate frequently appeared in anecdotes and poems in the Tang dynasty. In well-off families, the gate behind the main entrance was identified as the middle gate, behind which women resided. It can refer to a single gate that is flanked by

walls and leads to the inner quarter or an entire hall structure (*tingshi* 廳事) that is equipped with a door, standing in the middle of a long block of rooms. The middle gate in the Tang literature was intimately related to gender concerns. In the configuration of that time, the *zhong men* was expanded to consist of a middle gate plus its accessorial hall building (see Figure 1.2). It delineated women's domestic domain but also functioned as a negotiable zone, providing women with a succession of spaces in their contact with outsiders, especially greeting visitors.⁶² In the Song period, the middle gate was occasionally mentioned in literary works, but it became a crucial ritual concept in male elite discourse on



FIGURE 1.2. Women at the middle gate. From the twelfth-century scroll painting *Lady Wenji's Return to China: Wenji Arriving Home*. Ink, color, and gold on silk. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Wlodo Ross Collection, 28.65.

sexual segregation in a *jia*. It was interpreted to be a physical boundary separating women inside from men outside in a house structure. The revision of its connotation from the point of view of gender transformed the middle gate from a simple physical boundary in early Confucian classics to a powerful ritualistic one in Song Confucian revivalists' texts, and it continued to exert an influence on the dominant gender norms in Ming-Qing China. The new definition was largely propagated through the production, circulation, and inculcation of the Song prescriptive texts and related routine practices and gradually was accepted as an orthodox ideology in late imperial China.

Some Song elite men believed that a collapse of the idealized Confucian social order during the chaotic Five Dynasties era that preceded the Song was the cause of the fall of these ephemeral dynasties. Such men were intensely concerned about the reestablishment of social order in the Song dynasty in order to prevent the new empire from becoming like its immediate predecessors. The *jia* was located at the foundational level in the ideal theories of Confucian social order as the fundamental economic, political, and cultural unit. Thus, such thinkers drew upon a classic statement addressing the proper situations of men and women in the *jia* from the *Book of Changes* (*Yi jing* 易經): "Women's correct position is the inside; men's correct position is the outside. Men and women being correct is the great principle of heaven and earth 女正位乎內，男正位乎外。男女正，天地之大義也。" This passage became a focus of commentaries by Song Confucian scholars. They accentuated the "propriety" and "ethical order" that centered on differentiation among family/social status.⁶³ Song Confucians articulated the importance of domestic ritual practice in restoring an ideal social order.⁶⁴ And "the physical separation of the sexes . . . was given high value in Confucian ritual and ethical teachings," as Patricia Ebrey argues.⁶⁵

Among the considerable Song texts on family rituals, the most influential one was the *Notes on the Yi li* (*Shu yi* 書儀), written by the renowned politician and Confucian scholar Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086). Although a grand statesman, Sima Guang paid considerably more attention to family ethics than did most of his contemporaries, and he left us a large number of such writings. His unusual enthusiasm, as Ebrey has pointed out, resulted from his anxiety about "the insecurity of the *shidafu* as a class,"⁶⁶ which was reflected by women's insecurity in elite families.⁶⁷ "The intrusions of the market in women"⁶⁸ were becoming prominent and pervasive in his time. His proposal on sexual segregation was one of his efforts to "demarcate a sphere into which money would

not intrude.”⁶⁹ It originated from the “Domestic Regulations” chapter of the *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記), the classic Confucian book of rites, which provided as follows:

The men should not speak of what belongs to the inside, nor the women of what belongs to the outside. Except at sacrifices and funeral rites, they should not hand vessels to one another. In all other cases when they have occasion to give and receive anything, the woman should receive it in a basket. If she has no basket, they should both sit down, and the other put the thing on the ground, and she then take it up. Outside or inside, they should not go to the same well, nor to the same bathing-house. They should not share the same mat in lying down; they should not ask or borrow anything from one another; they should not wear similar upper or lower garments. Things spoken inside should not go out; words spoken outside should not come in. When a man goes into the interior of the house, he should not whistle or point. If he has occasion to move about in the night, he should use a light; and if he has no light, he should not stir. When a woman goes out at the door, she must keep her face covered. She should walk at night (only) with a light; and if she has no light, she should not stir. On the road, a man should take the right side, and a woman the left.⁷⁰

This ancient text prescribes men’s and women’s varied domestic practices, presents an idealized women/inner and men/outer picture of an orderly society, but does not propose any concrete physical boundary to enforce such a differentiation. Lisa Raphals, on the basis of her study of pre-Han classics, including the *Book of Rites*, interprets “separate spheres” as the conceptual distinction rather than the physical separation of men and women. The inner/outer polarity in early China “refers less to the physical separation of men and women than to the construction of distinctions between men and women based on functional specialization and symbolic activities.”⁷¹ The Song scholars might have realized the vagueness of physical separation between men and women in ancient Confucian canons. Therefore, they developed the obscure ancient idea of sexual segregation in the *Book of Rites* and elaborated on the significance of the middle gate in the physical separation of the sexes in a *jia*. Sima Guang was a pioneer in the enterprise of modifying and reinterpreting

ancient classics. His *Shu yi* articulates a visible and tangible physical separation rather than mere functional distinction between men and women:

In housing there should be a strict demarcation between the inner and outer parts, and a hard door guarding the inner quarters. The inner and outer parts should share neither a well, a washroom, nor a privy. The men are in charge of all affairs on the outside; the women manage the inside affairs. During the day, the men do not stay in their private rooms nor the women go beyond the *zhong men* without good reason. A woman who has to cross the *zhong men* and go outside must cover her face (for example, with a veil). Men who walk around at night must hold a candle. Menservants do not enter the *zhong men* unless to make house repairs or in cases of calamity (such as floods, fires, or robberies). If they must enter the *zhong men*, the women should avoid them. If they cannot help being seen (as in floods, fires and robberies), they must cover their faces with their sleeves. Maids should never cross the *zhong men* and go out without good reason (young slave-girls also); if they must do so, they too should cover their faces. The doorman and old servants serve to pass messages and objects between the inner and outer quarters of the house, but must not be allowed to enter rooms or kitchens at will.⁷²

In this text, Sima Guang presents an idealized image of family members' daily life in a *jia* with considerable wealth. The middle gate serves in Sima Guang's work as a crucial symbolic and practical object keeping men and women physically apart, although the original source from the *Book of Rites* on which he based his prescription does not mention the middle gate at all. Considering his agenda, the middle gate was intended to demarcate an undisturbed safe zone for women in elite families who were endangered by unprecedented social mobility in the world at large.

In *The Inner Quarters*, Ebrey cites Sima Guang's text to investigate the ideology of gender demarcation in the Song. She translates *zhong men* as "inner gate" and "inner door," which is actually not in accordance with Sima Guang's understanding of this concept. The *zhong* is a fluid territory that exists between inner and outer and takes shape in

the process of their interaction. And the *zhong men* is never a part of the inner domain, as the terms *inner gate* and *inner door* suggest. Angela Zito interprets the word *zhong* thus: “as a noun it means ‘middle,’ but an empty one.” As a verb, it “constantly creates itself through the correct separation of upper and lower, the correct bounding of inner and outer,” and is thus “the mediate third that makes meaningful difference possible.”⁷³ The connecting and differentiating implications of the word *zhong* was appropriated by Sima Guang to redefine the middle gate, which originally had no cultural importance in ancient texts. According to his model, the space of a *jia* was divided into two contiguous areas sharing a common boundary—the middle gate. The part behind the middle gate was called “inner” and viewed as a female-exclusive field during the day, while the opposite world on the other side of the middle gate was called “outer” and considered a forbidden zone to women.

Sima Guang’s reinterpretation of classical sexual segregation in the *jia* was widely recognized and quoted by his contemporaries. It was soon established as a new authoritative text and was generally accepted by Song elite. The Southern Song neo-Confucian master Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) directly quoted Sima Guang’s argument on sexual segregation in the first chapter of his prominent handbook compiled specially for the practice of ritual at home—the *Family Rituals* (*Jia li* 家禮).⁷⁴ Another Southern Song scholar, Yuan Cai 袁采 (ca. 1140–ca. 1195) also agreed with Sima Guang on the importance of the middle gate in separating inner from outer, and he cited Sima Guang’s point of view for family regulation in his *Precepts for Social Life*. He briefly summarized Sima Guang’s proposal on the segregation of the inner and outer quarters and highlighted the significance of the demarcation line—the middle gate. Moreover, he pushed it further by presenting it as the single most imperative issue in the project of managing a household. According to Yuan Cai, the inner/outer segregation is “over half of what is needed to manage a household.”⁷⁵ The middle gate, which sometimes functioned as a demarcation keeping men and women physically apart within the *jia* in the Tang dynasty, was thoroughly gendered in Song-era scholarly discourse on family rituals. It was manipulated by Song classicists to reinterpret the traditional Confucian ideology of sexual segregation and was transformed into an authorized physical boundary guaranteeing sexual segregation in the *jia*.

Besides separating men and women in their daily life at home, the middle gate also played an essential role in indicating gender differentiation in certain family rituals, according to Song family regulations. In

Sima Guang's *Shu yi*, the middle gate appears in three crucial ceremonies related to a female individual's transition of status during her life course—the pinning ceremony, wedding ceremony, and funeral. In his *Family Rituals*, Zhu Xi moved the pinning ceremony from the middle gate to the private rooms behind it, while still preserving activities related to the middle gate in wedding ceremonies and funerals.⁷⁶ As Zhu Xi prescribed, on the wedding day, the groom waited for the bride outside the main gate of her house, and the bride's parents accompanied and instructed her in the inner quarters. "Her uncles' wives, her aunts, her elder brothers' wives, and her elder sisters walked her to the *zhong men*."⁷⁷ Then the presiding man went out of the main gate to greet the groom and to lead him to the middle gate. "The duenna (*mu* 姆) took the bride through the *zhong men*, where the groom saluted her. They came down the western steps, the presiding man staying above. The groom then led and the bride followed. He raised the curtain of the sedan chair to await her. . . . The bride then got in the conveyance. The groom mounted his horse and led the way for the bridal conveyance [until they arrived at his house]."⁷⁸ In the process of the wedding ceremony, all the female relatives accustomed to residing in the inner quarter with the bride accompanied her out but stopped behind the middle gate. The groom was admitted into the area behind the main gate of the bride's house, but he had to stop in front of the middle gate to wait for the bride to come out. Only the female protagonist herself, the bride, was authorized to move across this middle gate boundary at this moment. The bride achieved her new identities symbolically—wife, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law in her husband's family—when she crossed over the middle gate of her natal family. Noticing the ritual significance of participants and places in the wedding ceremony, Christian de Pee argues, "a succession of stairs and doorways creates a stable, centered time and in which solemn ritualized bodies assume immediate ritual subject positions."⁷⁹ The middle gate, which used to keep the bride inside the inner quarter, functioned as a prominent symbolic ritual structure indicating her transition from a girl in her natal family to a woman in her marital family.

In his approach to the wedding ceremony, Zhu Xi endeavored, on the one hand, to underline sexual segregation on opposite sides of the middle gate, and on the other hand to emphasize the bride's mobility across it. However, in the context of funerals, he discouraged women's movement and elaborated on the physical separation of male and female surrounding the middle gate. During the funeral,

Everyone from the presiding mourner on down took up his or her mourning station. (Somewhere beyond the *zhong men* choose a plain chamber for the men's mourning station. Those who owed untrimmed sackcloth [three years] should sleep on coarse straw mats with clod pillows, without removing their hemp belts. They did not sit down with others. Unless on periodic visits to their mother, they did not go past the *zhong men*. Those who owed even sackcloth [usually one year] slept on mats. Those who owed greater processed cloth [nine months] or lower mourning and lived elsewhere went home once the encoffining was accomplished and spend their nights in the outer quarters. After three months they returned to their bedrooms. The women had their mourning stations in a separate room on the other side of the *zhong men* or stayed by the side of the coffin. They removed any decorated curtains, quilts, or cushions from the rooms. They did not go to the men's mourning stations without warning.)⁸⁰

A funeral was a grand ceremony because the dead person's relatives were all supposed to participate, regardless of gender. It tended to be a sort of mixer for men and women to make contact with each other, and therefore maintaining gender segregation in this context appeared to be an imperative project for Song classicists.⁸¹ According to Zhu Xi's text, during the funeral men and women were assigned to stay in isolated mourning stations divided by the middle gate.

Compared with routine everyday life, rituals held in the *jia* reinforced the ideology of gender segregation more intensively. All family members who participated in family rituals not only witnessed the arrangement of the deliberate gender segregation but also practiced it under other attendees' supervision. As Catherine Bell asserts, "through a series of physical movements ritual practices spatially and temporally construct an environment organized according to schemes of privileged opposition. The construction of this environment and the activities within it simultaneously work to impress these schemes upon the bodies of participants."⁸² These Song moralists certainly acknowledged that rituals in the *jia* were valuable settings for indoctrinating the ideology of gender segregation. Therefore, in their family regulations, on the one hand, women were described as hidden individuals staying behind the middle gate and in the inner quarter in their daily life, and on the

other hand, gender segregation on the two opposite sides of the middle gate was openly displayed during family rituals. Sima Guang and Zhu Xi endowed the middle gate with new connotations and reinterpreted it as a symbolic object implying gender segregation in their discourses of routine family life and occasional ritual performances at home.

The collapse of aristocracy and rise of literati in the Tang-Song transition inspired many Song elite men, including Sima Guang and Zhu Xi, to compose family rituals to supplement state rituals in regulating the society.⁸³ They overthrew the traditional view that “rituals do not reach down to commoners” that had dominated Chinese society until the Tang and broadcasted domestic rituals to elite and commoner households via the privately compiled ritual manuals. Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals* was incorporated into the system of state rituals in the Yuan dynasty and intensely promoted and widely disseminated by the early Ming emperors. It, in historian Zhang Wenchang’s words, was elevated to the status of “public ritual,” which demonstrated the state’s ultimate authority in arbitrating private and public rituals.⁸⁴ The canonization of the *Family Rituals* in late imperial China gave rise to its unmatched popularity in guiding people’s ritual practice. One of its key terms, the *zhong men*, as well as the implied gender significance, which was not available in ancient classics but defined by Song Confucian revivalists, constituted an essential part of the orthodox gender ideology, as is evident in numerous Ming-Qing writings.

The Song literati idea that the area behind the middle gate was the morally and socially correct place for women appears also in literary works other than prescriptions on family regulations. Sima Guang’s contemporary, Wen Tong 文同 (1018–1079), directly referred to the *zhong men* in two poems describing women’s daily life. One is written from the viewpoint of a lonely woman staying at home after her husband has left:

After you left,	自君之出矣
I spent day and night looking at my lonely shadow.	弔影度晨夕
The <i>zhong men</i> place allows only one step, There was no trace of my footstep there.	中門一步地 未省有行迹
Examining my appearance and conduct in the inner quarter,	閨闈足儀檢
I was always afraid that I might violate any family rule.	常恐犯繩尺
I wanted to send you a letter,	欲寄錦字書
Would you know who said [these words]? ⁸⁵	知誰者云的

In this poem, the author depicts a woman who stays in the inner quarter and does not ever reach the middle gate because she acknowledges the family rules, realizes the significance of self-restraint, and chooses to behave herself when her husband is not at home. She can rely on an object such as a letter as a medium to transmit her thoughts to her husband, while her physical body has to remain behind the middle gate in her husband's *jia*. Here Wen Tong employed the middle gate as a metaphor for a woman's conventional place. Another Wen poem is titled "A Female Weaver's Resentment." Here the protagonist is a hard-working weaver whose handiwork has been sent to the governmental storehouse as tax but refused as low-quality work. "Her parents brought the cloth back home, and threw it under the *zhong men*. The parents and she looked at each other without saying anything, and tears suddenly poured out."⁸⁶ Different from the first poem, which focuses on a lonely woman's emotion, the second is a concrete narrative of a female weaver's miserable experience and her relationships within her *jia*. Wen Tong chose the middle gate as the representative site for the parents to contact the daughter working in the inner quarter. In contrast to the erotic and romantic sensuality that prevailed in the Tang poems that are related to the middle gate,⁸⁷ Wen Tong's writings connect it directly to women's virtue (physical confinement/womanly work). It might be hard to posit that the discrepancy in literary creation reflects changing social reality; however, one can safely conclude that in the mind of a Song gentleman like Wen Tong, the middle gate was a symbol demarcating women's authorized place in the *jia*, just as it had been for family-regulation writers.

What we have seen suggests that the middle gate was viewed as a crucial concept in defining women's inner quarters within the space of the *jia* in Song elite discourse on ideal family ethical order. However, to what extent was this idea accepted by both elites and commoners? Did the middle gate really function as a boundary keeping male and female physically apart during the Song period? Song primary sources discussing the middle gate are insufficient to allow me to offer definite answers to these questions. Nevertheless, *zhong men*-related narratives appearing in a variety of historical records allow historians to trace the function of the middle gate in Song society.

Fu Bi 富弼 (1004–1083), Sima Guang's senior colleague and friend, was disappointed at factional conflicts in the court. In 1071 he moved back to his hometown in Luoyang, where Sima Guang also resided. He "devoted his full heart to the study of the Way (*dao xue* 道學), and lived in Huanzheng Hall 還政堂 alone. Every morning after he woke up, he

released the key for the middle gate, entered to witness the ceremony held in his family shrine, and treated his wife [respectfully] as a guest.”⁸⁸ In Fu Bi’s *jia*, the middle gate functioned as a crucial boundary separating his and his wife’s domestic space, just as Sima Guang prescribed in the *Shu yi*. The justification for Sima Guang’s middle-gate segregation theory came from the authority of ancient canons. He endeavored to revive Confucianism and propagated the classical ideas that he reinterpreted by incorporating social concerns of his time. As Ebrey points out, “he drew on traditional materials, especially the classics. . . . But the way he organized this material reflected his own values and concerns.”⁸⁹ His notion of the middle gate was accepted and respected as the orthodox gender ideology by later Confucians; nonetheless, he was neither the only nor the first one who appreciated the importance of the middle gate in the Northern Song period. Fu Bi was fifteen years older than Sima Guang, and his emphasis on the middle gate in practice could not have been influenced by Sima Guang’s book, as many later Confucian scholars were. Fu Bi’s example shows that Sima Guang’s conception of the middle gate did not come out of the blue, but very likely it was based on his knowledge of the Tang practice as well as his observation of contemporaries’ domestic life.⁹⁰

Fu Bi attempted to stay away from family life as he was pursuing the pure Way, and he appeared more radical than Sima Guang in practicing the gender segregation ideal in his *jia*. He lived an ascetic life; he locked the middle gate and slept outside at night, which was not suggested by Sima Guang.⁹¹ However, he still felt it necessary to fulfill his basic duties to the *jia* during the day. He crossed the middle gate to participate in family ritual performance and communicated with his wife, despite his puritanical insistence on gender segregation for the night. The record of Fu Bi’s domestic life seems trustworthy, as the author, Shao Bowen 邵伯溫 (1057–1134), must have obtained the firsthand sources from his father Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), the prominent Northern Song neo-Confucian master who also lived in Luoyang and visited Fu Bi’s *jia* frequently after Fu Bi retreated from state affairs. Shao Yong, as the probable source, very likely transmitted the information to his son due to his personal appreciation of the importance of the middle gate inside the *jia* and his admiration for Fu Bi’s ritual behaviors, although none of his extant work addresses such a gender issue. The rule of sexual separation between inner and outer in Fu Bi’s *jia* was ensured by Fu Bi’s habit of locking the middle gate at night; however, the interaction between inner and outer proved inevitable, even in such a strictly regulated family. The

newly excavated funerary inscription of Fu Bi's wife reveals that, in addition to discussing and managing family ritual affairs with her husband as Shao Bowen's narrative shows, Fu Bi's wife always accompanied him in enjoying a carefree life in their enormous and spectacular garden.⁹² Surprisingly, the existence of the middle gate was entirely compatible with the Fu couple's harmonious conjugal relationship. In the *jias* of dedicated Confucian classicists like Fu Bi, contact between men and women inside or outside the middle gate during the day was unavoidable and was perhaps joyfully expected in spite of male house heads' observance of idealized middle gate-centered sexual separation.

Fu Bi was not the only person committed to the middle gate separation among Sima Guang's acquaintances. Zeng Gongliang 曾公亮 (999–1078) came from Fujian and served in the same court as Sima Guang. His son, Zeng Xiaochun 曾孝純, “managed the household strictly and tidily. The male family members . . . did not stay in private rooms during the day, but stayed in halls or study rooms separately according to the order of their ages.”⁹³ As Sima Guang stated, “During the day, the men do not stay in their private rooms nor the women go beyond the *zhong men* without good reason.”⁹⁴ Men were supposed to stay in the outer quarter when they were at home during the day, so that they would neither be bothered by nor bother women located behind the middle gate. This rule was precisely practiced in the Zeng family. In this narrative, the fact that men did not stay in the inner quarters during daytime was stated as support for the declaration that “Zeng Xiaochun managed his household strictly and tidily.” This text originated from Zhang Guangzu's 張光祖 (twelfth century) *Yanxing guijian* 言行龜鑑. The book title itself means that what this book recorded was past words and deeds serving as models or warnings to future generations. Therefore, the strict gender separation in Zeng Xiaochun's *jia* must not have been a typical practice for normal Song families.

Some detailed descriptions of women's inner quarters in anecdotes in and out of Fujian further prove the existence of the middle gate in elite families beyond Sima Guang's circle. In his *Kui che zhi* 睽車志, Guo Tuan 郭彖 (twelfth century) records events taking place in the house of Wang Gai 王陔, the son of the State Councilman Wang Tao 王綯 (1074–1137), in Kunshan 崑山 County of Pingjiang 平江 Prefecture:

Wang Gai stayed at home for his mourning. He resided in the room next to the hall by himself. There were many maid-servants and concubines in his family, so that the hall gate

[*tang men* 堂門] was locked before they slept at night. One night, an old nanny cried continuously as if she was bothered by a nightmare. The other maidservants were surprised and woke up. They went to her bed and took a look, but did not see anything. The whole family was scared. They lit candles and looked for her everywhere [in the inner quarter] but did not find her. Then they unlocked the hall gate and looked for her in the outer quarter, and saw her lying on the couch beside the pavilion in the west garden. . . . The house was surrounded by walls, and the *zhong men* was locked. Therefore there should have been no way to go between the inner and outer quarters. [I] do not know from where she went out.⁹⁵

Here Wang Gai stayed outside while female family members lived inside the middle gate during the mourning period, which conforms to Sima Guang's proposal on funerals in the *Shu yi*. The hall gate in the narrative was clearly identical or equivalent to the middle gate. It was locked at night in Wang Gai's house to prevent lascivious affairs from happening in the inner quarters while female family members slept within. In the comment on this story, the author assumes, based on his common sense, that the open middle gate provides the unique passage connecting inner and outer quarters in the family house; therefore, he admits that he could not explain how the nanny was found in the outer yard while all women should have stayed in the inner quarter behind the locked middle gate at night.

In Wang Gai's house, the middle gate was closed and locked only at night, while in Yang Jian's 楊戩 (?–1121) house in the capital, it was locked day and night when the household head was not at home:

Yang Jian once went to Zhengzhou 鄭州 to visit a grave when he was still wealthy and powerful. He took some family members west, and left dozens of concubines in his house in the capital. The *zhong men* and main gate were both locked. Only a rotary table was set in the rift on the wall to transfer food inside, and the supervision was extremely severe.⁹⁶ A dependent was living in the house in the outer quarters [*wai she* 外舍]. A concubine favored his appearance. She used a ladder to let him in, made love, and sent him out before dawn.⁹⁷

In this story, Yang Jian deliberately kept the middle gate in his house closed all the time to prevent his concubines from having improper

er contact with men in the outer quarters while he was away. This suggests that in Yang Jian's view, the middle gate was a reliable barrier guaranteeing sexual segregation. However, even under such strict supervision, communication between women in the inner quarter and men in the outer quarter still occurred, as the protagonists found an imaginative way to go beyond the limitation of the middle gate. The fact that the concubine was obsessed with the dependent's appearance implied that the middle gate was not closed all day before Yang Jian left, so that she had the opportunity to go out of the middle gate and encounter or see this dependent residing in the outer quarters.

Both Wang Gai's and Yang Jian's houses accommodated a considerable number of female residents, including concubines, because of the preeminent status of the male household heads. Unlike wives, concubines were expected to entertain the household heads and their guests, and their ties to their master's *jia* were impermanent. Their functions of entertainment and networking did not fit them in the framework of domestic gender separation, which may explain why Sima Guang did not address the issue of concubines in the ritual discourse centered on the middle gate. But in the two stories above, concubines were concealed behind the closed middle gates under certain conditions (funeral in the Wang family; the absence of the master in the Yang family). Beverly Bossler, in her study of the prosperity of courtesanship and concubinage, has noticed the enhanced commercialization of women from the Northern Song to Southern Song. In the Southern Song, in response to the increasing social and family problems caused by the proliferation of concubines, elite men made efforts to domesticate these entertainers.⁹⁸ In addition to eulogizing concubines' commitment to the *jia* and advocating their womanly virtues in literary creation, I suspect that some elite men may have at least occasionally attempted to "domesticate" concubines physically by constraining them to the inner quarters behind the middle gates, as Yang Jian and Wang Gai had practiced in the late Northern Song and early Southern Song, respectively. Unfortunately, we are short of primary sources to determine on what occasions the confinement of concubines was conducted, to what extent it spread among elite households, and whether there were discrepancies when it was applied in the Northern and Southern Song. However, it could be concluded that a few Song gentlemen viewed the middle gate as a practical structure for gender segregation and sometimes applied it even to marginalized women inside their *jia*. Thus the middle gate was locked at night in Wang Gai's house, and day and night when Yang Jian went out for a visit, to prevent concubines from going out.

The preconditions for the closure of the middle gate presented in these two examples also hinted that the middle gates in these two houses must have been opened at normal times or during the day. As an open gate implied the possibility of communication, the contact between women behind the open middle gate, whether wives or concubines, and men on the opposite side should have been inevitable, which suggests it may well have been considered acceptable. Therefore, it is questionable whether the items elaborating on gender segregation in people's daily life in family regulations were strictly followed in Song elite families. Taking the above examples into account, it seems that keeping rigorous gender segregation during the day was an unfeasible proposal for both male and female members in elite *jia* during the Song period. Furthermore, the concern of class differences urges me to doubt the prevalence of "middle gate" in Song society as a whole. Limited by extant sources, the layout of houses occupied by lower class families, who constituted the majority of the Song population, remains unknown. The structure of "middle gate" very likely did not apply to the dwellings of poor families, which might merely contain one room.

The general assumption of the lack of strict gender segregation inside the *jia* applies to the Fujian district as well. Similar hints come from the epitaph of Ms. Ye 葉氏 (1044–1069) written by Huang Shang 黃裳 (1044–1130), a Fujian scholar and official. According to his description, although Ms. Ye's natal family was a large and influential family in Fujian, she "was cautious and respectful, neither arrogant nor willful." She usually stayed at home and did not go outside of her husband's house. "She definitely asked a concubine to accompany her even if she had to go outside of the *zhong men* sometimes."⁹⁹ Zhang Cundao 章存道, Ms. Ye's husband, sent Huang Shang a letter asking him to compose a funerary inscription for her in 1089, twenty years after her death. Huang Shang's narrative does not suggest any personal knowledge of Ms. Ye, whom he might never have met. The everyday life details he presented in her epitaph must have derived from the biography that her husband provided. Ms. Ye was described as a self-contained and well-behaved woman by her husband, and this cloistered image was appreciated and copied by Huang Shang, the epitaph author outside her *jia*.

Generally speaking, the author of a woman's epitaph was asked to write an essay to praise and memorialize the deceased woman, so that matters demonstrating her womanly virtue were highlighted. As Huitzu Lü argues, "the function of writing biographies was to set up paradigms to be emulated and commemorated throughout history."¹⁰⁰ In Ms. Ye's

biography, the fact that Ms. Ye seldom left the house and did not cross the middle gate to the outer quarters without a female family member demonstrated her particularly prudent character. Both her husband and Huang viewed her self-confinement as a valuable virtue worthy of being recorded, acclaimed, and imitated. The composition of Ms. Ye's epitaph supports Patricia Ebrey's statement that "one way the upper class made its distinctiveness visible was by making its women invisible."¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the intentional portrayal of Ms. Ye's acquiescence behind the middle gate in the epitaph indicates that keeping to the inner quarters could not have been a standard practice among Song women—or how could it have been held up as a particular model? I assume that on the one hand, the middle gate was not part of the everyday life experience of women whose houses were not sophisticated enough to include it; and on the other hand, elite women who lived in houses equipped with middle gates rarely perceived them as favorable structures that protected women or appreciated their value as Sima Guang had expected. Actually, the middle gate is seldom mentioned in Song women's epitaphs, in spite of their considerable number. Even Zhu Xi, the Southern Song neo-Confucian master who reiterated Sima Guang's strict gender segregation through the middle gate division in his book on family rituals, did not present any examples similar to Ms. Ye's in the epitaphs that he composed for contemporary women, which might suggest that his real-life perception of gender relationship differed from that in his precriptive literature.

In summary, during the Song period, accompanying their concern about the reconstruction of social order, authors of family regulations and other texts moved well beyond the original literal meaning of *zhong men* as simply a middle gate to view it from the aspect of gender. They transformed the meaning from that of a residential structural detail to a symbolic boundary demarcating the areas of male and female in their discourses on the *jia*. In their daily lives, women were advised to stay in the inner quarter behind the middle gate day and night, while men remained in the outer area in front of the middle gate during day. During certain important family ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, men and women were assigned to their respective positions in front of or behind the middle gate to represent and reinforce the ideology of gender segregation. Compared with daily life, strict gender segregation was surely more easily practiced at such special ritual occasions. In spite of the prevalent acceptance of the traditional Confucian notion of gender segregation among the populace and the Song literati's promotion

of the middle gate as a boundary that was supposed to make segregation feasible, practices utterly conforming to the ideology must not have been predominant in reality, judging by narratives in Song anecdotes and biographies. On the one hand, the middle gate could function as a reliable concrete boundary effectively keeping males and females physically apart in a specific *jia* when some family members attempted to realize the idea of gender segregation and closed it under certain circumstances. On the other hand, an open middle gate indicated potential inner and outer communication, and the middle gate area definitely provided a special arena for the interaction between males regularly living in the outer quarters and females in the inner quarters. Therefore, the physical boundary between inner and outer in the *jia* was negotiable and flexible despite the efforts of Confucian moralists to erect the middle gate as an inviolable boundary.

Gate Titles for Mothers

In Ming-Qing households, as Dorothy Ko argues, “the innermost realm of the private sphere was the prerogative of women. The women’s quarters, tucked away in inconspicuous corners of the gentry housing compound, were off limits even to adult men in the family.”¹⁰² In a Song *jia* likewise, the inner quarter behind the middle gate was, in ideal views and to some extent in practice, the sole authorized place for women to reside. However, the inner quarter was not a female-exclusive territory. Even the strictest family regulations only prohibited male family members from entering during the day. Thus the various structures scattered in the inner quarters were shared by both male and female family members in the *jia*. Among these house structures, some were specially designed or constructed for mothers, and some of their gates were endowed with gendered titles to please mothers. They were transformed into places for mothers within the *jia* under the supervision of filial sons. In contrast to the inner quarters, which were ideologically linked to the general concept of gender segregation, these house structures and gate titles were conspicuously gendered because of their concrete relation to specific male and female figures’ interaction in a certain *jia*.

Filial piety was a primary virtue in Confucian discourse and “was important and arguably central to the Confucian didactic texts of the Song period.”¹⁰³ It “referred to every child’s obligation to revere and serve parents in life and to continue that reverence and service after death through mourning and ritual offerings,” as Fangqin Du and Susan

Mann generalize.¹⁰⁴ Adults were obliged to satisfy their parents' fundamental material requirements. Furthermore, "in his nourishing of them, his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure."¹⁰⁵ To be a filial child, one should not only support and attend one's parents but also entertain them (during their lifetimes). Therefore, in a *jia* various structures, such as pavilions, ponds, and yards, were constructed or made the most of to make parents happy. Entertaining mothers with multiple house structures is likely to have been a popular practice favored by filial sons during the Song period. In addition to being employed to strengthen the mother-son association, these places for mothers must have been endowed with multiple functions as normal house structures located within the *jia*. Their gender significance depended on the continuation of the concrete interaction between mothers and sons. Once such a specific connection disappeared, so would the gendered nature of the site. Fortunately, besides providing mothers with multiple sites in which to spend their leisure time, sons sometimes labeled house structures to please their mothers. It provides us a distinctive perspective to investigate their gendered implications.

Among the titles for mothers, which are recorded in many Fujian local gazetteers, "longevity (*shou* 壽)" was the most popular attribute. In Fuzhou, the famous politician Zhang Jun 張浚 (1097–1164) had a hall called "hall of longevity (*mei shou tang* 眉壽堂)" established for his mother in the governmental office.¹⁰⁶ In the prefecture of Yanping 延平, when Zhang Xianwu 張憲武 was the official administrator managing Zhangzhou 漳州, his mother was ninety years old. "She was issued an imperial mandate during the Xuanhe 宣和 reign (1119–1125). Therefore, a hall [in the house] was entitled hall of longevity (*mei shou tang* 眉壽堂)."¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, in Jinjiang County 晉江 of Quanzhou Prefecture 泉州, there used to be a pavilion in the city hall. "In the fifth year of the Shaoxing 紹興 period (1135), the county administrator, Lü Qiuci 閻邱次 lived there with his mother. He renovated the pavilion, and named it 'peace and longevity (*yan shou* 燕壽).'"¹⁰⁸ Zhang Jun's *mei shou tang* and Lü Qiuci's *yan shou tang* were recorded under the category of "governmental office (*gong shu* 公署)" in two eighteenth-century gazetteers, which indicated these two halls' locations. Zhang Xianwu's *mei shou tang*, which was listed under the broad category of "geography (*di li* 地理)" in a local gazetteer of 1525, must also have been situated in the local government building, considering his official post in Zhangzhou. These narratives were rather brief and neither mentioned the hall structures' concrete locations in the governmental offices nor provided

any information about the physical connections between them and these female subjects. Nevertheless, they suggested that specific house structures could be deployed as and transformed into a symbol signifying sons' respect for and best wishes to mothers by being conferred with a gendered title. In comparison with average people awarded by the government with gate plaques for extraordinary and usually dramatic filial deeds, elite men, especially officials, enjoyed more peaceful and joyful channels to demonstrate and publicize their filial piety.

Shou (longevity) might have been the favorite word used in the house structure titles to entertain mothers, but it was not the only popular moniker. Other titles celebrated the intimate relationship between sons and mothers; "a room named 'leaning on clouds' (*yi yun xuan* 依雲軒)" was such an example. According to Chen Qian's 陳遷 (twelfth century) essay,

Zheng Zongqi 鄭宗器 refused the appointment because his mother was old and sick. He built a small room in the rear of his house, and hung a horizontal board inscribed with "leaning on clouds" (*yi yun* 依雲) on it. He attended his mother day and night. He called himself "the hermit living in the escaping studio (*dun zhai ju shi* 遯齋居士)." It seemed that he would continue his life in such a way. People in the past were happy when they got appointment documents, and thought that their salary would be enough to support their mothers. Only Zheng Zongqi abandoned his official career because of his mother. He did not act in accordance with previous cases, but appeared to be more sincere in emotion. White clouds were ten thousand miles away. Ascending a height and looking up at them was not as good as taking care of [the mother] at one's side. [For the son], having a room to look up at the mother and stay next to her was joyful. A room was not famous because it was high. This room was well-known owing to Zheng Zongqi.

Yi yun xuan was a room built by Zheng Zongqi especially for his mother in the innermost of the house, but it was not a female-exclusive territory as Confucian classics prescribed. It was a shared place for both Zheng Zongqi and his mother, as he usually stayed there attending her. *Yi yun* was an incomplete phrase in which the subject, the son, was eliminated. *Yun* (clouds) was the object, a metaphor for the mother. And

the predicate *yi* (lean on) demonstrated the son's eagerness to stay right at her side. *Yi yun* was a gendered title dedicated to the mother by the son, while the son employed it to declare himself, a male scholar, as the unique active protagonist in this context. The implication of this title was elaborated in a narrative by the son's friend, Chen Qian. As Chen Qian stated, it was because the title represented Zheng Zongqi's image as a sincere filial son that the name *yi yun xuan* was valuable. In contrast to other congratulatory titles such as *mei shou* and *yan shou*, which expressed the great bliss that the sons wanted their mothers to enjoy, the *yi yun* title highlighted the close relationship between a son and his mother and exhibited the significance of sons' agency in bringing mothers pleasure. By hanging such a plaque on the gate of a room in the inner quarter, a man penetrated a conventional female space and participated in the construction of domesticity that scholars normally attribute to women.

Besides the above obviously gendered titles adorning certain house structures to entertain mothers specifically, there were also house structure titles displaying sons' filial piety without any gender preference. For example, in Huai An County 懷安 of Fuzhou, the local administrator, Yu Xiang 俞嚮, renovated the garden in the governmental building in 1120. There was a magnificent tower in the garden, and Yu Xiang "often accompanied his parents here for recreation, and named this tower 'colorful clothing (*ban yi* 班衣).'"¹⁰⁹ *Ban yi* referred to an old story about Lao Laizi, a seventy-year-old man who dressed himself in colorful garments and acted like a little child to amuse his parents.¹¹⁰ Yu Xiang employed this literary quotation to transform the scenic tower to a cultural location where his filial piety was performed. Of course, the *ban yi* title was somewhat related to gender as it indicated the filial child in this case was a son. However, compared with *yi yun*, which was explicitly designed for the mother, the title of *ban yi* was not based on the gender of the recipient.

Entitling house structures in a *jia* was a prevalent practice among Song literati. Generally speaking, they used concise phrases of two to four characters to display their knowledge, express their emotion, and manifest their ideals. Entitling house structures demonstrated the male elite's privileged literacy. They treated these signifying titles embodying their personal philosophy as important media for elite communication. Song gentlemen enjoyed presenting them to friends in their social group who had the capability to appreciate these words, and they welcomed their feedback. Thus in Song primary sources there are abundant articles composed by household heads or other elite members who articulated their interpretations of specific titles. Among these house structure titles,

those dedicated to parents appear to be exceptional because of their gender sense. Of course, the opportunity and ability to entitle house structures for parents was the exclusive privilege of elite sons, while the recipients of these titles representing filial piety could be parents of either gender. The conduct of building or naming a house structure for a father also existed in the Song period. Men sometimes named their studios (*zhai* 齋), which might often have been included in the grounds of the *jia* compound as a whole, for some characteristics of their father's. However, such a phenomenon only happened after the father was dead.¹¹¹ While those house structure titles designed for mothers pleased the living mothers and the structures themselves provided the mothers with places for entertainment, these studio titles merely served as commemorations conveying sons' affection for deceased fathers.

The titles concerning parents were either a description of the parents' perfect living situation, such as *mei shou* and *yan shou*, or a statement of sons' fidelity, like *yi yun* and *ban yi*. In such titles the parents' agency was totally neglected; they appeared as purely passive recipients of their sons' blessing or filial behavior. For the father with an independent personality in an elite family, the titles created in this way were inappropriate. Furthermore, even if a son offered a certain house structure to his father in the name of filial piety, he was supposed to wait for his father to entitle it, which accorded with their proper positions in the family hierarchy. Therefore, in Song Fujian, most house structure titles that evidently presented sons' filial piety were particularly for mothers, in spite of the existence of several titles that referred to parents. Filial piety was a unilateral activity that could be accomplished without parents' voluntary participation. It could be expressed more freely in the mother-son relationship than in the father-son relationship because the conventional ignorance of women's agency provided sons enough freedom to perform filial piety straightforwardly, while a father's relative superior status in the *jia* prohibited his sons from acting in ways that might challenge their father's authority. The fact that there were no house structure titles presenting sons' filial piety to living fathers illustrates the sons' compromises and limits in the manifestation of filial piety.

To reiterate, the places dedicated to mothers in the Song *jia* derived from sons' intentions to demonstrate their filial piety. These places could take various forms, such as a pavilion, a garden, and a hall, and they were used by the sons to entertain their mothers. Furthermore, some of them were adorned with gate titles to express the sons' respect, loyalty, and best wishes to the mothers. While government officials conveyed

women's virtue and agency to outsiders by attaching honorary plaques to house or lane gates, elite men displayed theirs in front of all family members in the inner quarters by entitling places for mothers. These gate titles presented an unconventional contrast of "women/outer" versus "men/inner." It interestingly did not challenge the orthodox "men/outer vs. women/inner" gender norm but supplemented the latter in revealing men's and women's interaction in the spaces both inside and outside the *jia*. Most records of gate titles for mothers were narratives displaying how devoted the sons were. The mothers' activities at these locations were seldom discussed, and their agency seems to be imperceptible though they are the ostensible beneficiaries of the structures. In spite of the limitation of the primary sources, the mothers must surely have benefited from the sons' filial gifts. They were presented with wonderful sites for recreation and with opportunities for their sons' company. As we have seen, similar places dedicated to living fathers did not exist in Song Fujian as sons could not behave as freely vis-à-vis fathers as they did with their mothers. Thus mothers had some exclusive channels through which to enjoy the sons' filial commitments, if at some cost to their agency, which was in accordance with the fact that the mother-son relationship was much more frequently represented in Song literature than the father-son one.

The social and cultural boundaries between inner and outer in the gender discourse were negotiated and subordinated to various interpretations.¹¹² In contrast, the gates of the *jia*, as the easily perceivable physical demarcations between inner and outer, were fixed, concrete, and durable. They stood as visible, tangible, and practical boundaries between inner and outer, but such boundaries simultaneously ceased to function once the gates were opened. A multitude of gates of the *jia* broke the confinement of the wall and subsequently invalidated the assumption of identifying women with domesticity. They staged the dynamic interaction between various inner-*jia* as well as outside-*jia* forces who contended for power in the construction of the domestic space. Crossing the house gate and lane gate, house residents, men and women alike, expanded their living and social space outward, while government officials transmitted state authority inward and exerted an effect on domestic culture. Beyond the middle gate, women demonstrated their freedom in communicating with men in spite of a few Confucian moralists' discouragement. And behind the middle gate, gates of individual rooms conveyed the agreeable intimacy between mothers and sons. The openness of these gates means that they were never reliable objects segregating men and women.

Women in traditional China, whether high class or commoners, capitalized on these physical outlets, crossed layers of gates, moved beyond the inner quarters, and explored a broad outside world that Confucian precepts failed to picture.



Women on Journeys

Despite the didactic efforts by Song Confucian moralists to keep women behind the middle gate (*zhong men* 中門) at all times, in reality women found many opportunities to cross the gates of their houses and leave the *jia* temporarily. The reasons for their departures varied widely and can be divided into four categories.¹ The first were necessary movements requiring passage from one *jia* to another, such as transferring from a natal family to a marital one, accompanying a husband or son to his official position, visiting parents, or escorting a husband's coffin home. This was a momentary transition in status for a woman, who had to leave one *jia* and walk through outside space in order to reach her destination, another *jia*. The second reason was entertainment and pilgrimage. In contrast to the relatively circumscribed space of the *jia*, the outside world was dazzling and could well attract the attention of women. Some found the opportunity for recreational travel in the space outside the *jia*, and some female religious devotees were inspired by their pious belief and sought the opportunity for journeys to sacred places.² The third was traveling for work. Professional women such as midwives, matchmakers, traveling religious practitioners, weavers who plied their trade from household to household, and peddlers left the *jia* to make a living in the outside sphere.³ Finally, departures might be undertaken to elude danger at chaotic moments. When threatened by natural calamities, robberies, or insurgencies, provisional escape was one choice for women that was not taken lightly.

Dorothy Ko has corrected the misconception of the image of cloistered women by investigating their outings in late imperial China. Ming-Qing elite women yielded plentiful literary outputs informing us of their experience outside the *jia*. As Dorothy Ko has stated, “even gentrywomen traveled a great deal, on trips ranging from long-distance journeys accompanying their husbands on official appointments to excursions for pleasure in the company of other women.”⁴ The shortage of Song women’s own travel writings was compensated by the abundance of such records left by contemporary men. They documented women’s reach beyond the inner space of the *jia*, elite women and female commoners alike.

Whether premeditated or involuntary, these journeys extended the women’s agencies into the outside space. Women might encounter diverse obstacles when they walked out beyond the gates of their *jia*. Furthermore, they, especially high-class women, might not dare to completely expose themselves because the orthodox ideology of gender segregation was a restriction as well as a protection for them. When they stayed in the *jia* and were shut off from the gaze of outsiders, it could easily be assumed they were ideal women who conducted their lives in accordance with conventional ideology. However, once they entered the outer field scrutinized by the public, women had to consider the tolerance of their male contemporaries who were authorized to dominate the outside space, avoid challenging the authority of prevalent gender norms, and try to negotiate the subtle balance between orthodox ethics and de facto acceptability. Actually, Song narratives discussing women’s activities outside the *jia* show elite males’ acknowledgment and acceptance of a more flexible living space for women, which went beyond the limits imagined by contemporary Confucian moral preaching and thus penetrated men’s legitimate territory, but without essentially jeopardizing the social order. In this chapter, I will investigate the objects that women employed and the material traces that they left outside the *jia* as well as the movements of their own physical bodies to reveal what women looked like in travel.

Vehicles

During the Song period, as at other times, men and women alike made decisions on their modes of travel according to the terrain, distance, and their or their families’ financial situation. Virtually all vehicles were used by both male and female: with only a few exceptions, no vehicles

were exclusively produced for or used by either men or women. However, because the world outside the *jia* was traditionally viewed as men's authorized sphere and, in the views of Confucian moralists, ought not to be open to women's penetration, women's use of vehicles was endowed with many more gendered implications.

The vehicles frequently used by Song people were the sedan chair (*jiao* 轎) and the carriage (*che* 車). The use of sedan chairs is believed to have undergone a distinctive transition accompanying the central government's relocation in the twelfth century. Zhu Xi, who lived throughout Emperor Gaozong's period in the thirteenth century, once informed his disciples of such a change in the use of sedan chairs during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition: "Before the imperial court moved to the south, the elite did not use sedan chairs. Scholars such as Wang Anshi 王安石 and Cheng Yi 程頤 all objected to substituting human for animal labor. Officials all rode horses. Even very old or sick officials refused to take sedan chairs, although they received special grace (*yi en* 異恩) to do so from the emperors. But after the imperial court moved to the south, sedan chairs were generally used."⁵ Zhu Xi pointed out that taking sedan chairs was treated as a special grace bestowed by the emperors to some needy and high-ranking officials in the Northern Song, before the capital moved south. As James Liu's study shows, officials in the Northern Song always went to court on horseback, and "high-minded and self-disciplined Confucians disapproved of sedan-chairs."⁶ Confucian idealists such as Wang Anshi and Cheng Yi rejected sedan chairs out of humane concerns,⁷ and their moral practices were admired by Zhu Xi, who himself seldom used sedan chairs⁸ but did not expect his Southern Song contemporaries to model the Northern Song paragons.⁹ He noticed that taking sedan chairs became a popular practice by officials in his time. In the *Conversations of Master Zhu* (*Zhu Xi yulei* 朱子語類), a collection of his conversations with the disciples, Zhu Xi mentioned his peers' use of sedan chairs with no moral judgment except for the criticism of eunuchs as users.¹⁰

This widespread use of sedan chairs during Emperor Gaozong's reign was explained by the editors of the official Song history, *Song shi* 宋史, which includes many documents recording official use of sedan chairs in the Southern Song, as in the following excerpt:

After the restoration [*zhong xing* 中興, i.e., the re-creation of the Song state in the south], there were no rules directing official use of vehicles. Officials rode horses to attend rituals

and took sedan chairs to go to court. In the old regulations there had been many restrictions on the use of sedan chairs. During the restoration, officials rushed east and west to suppress rebellions, and had to go through dangerous and difficult roads. Therefore imperial edicts allowed them to take sedan chairs. From that time on, all officials usually took sedan chairs.¹¹

In the Northern Song, elite males consciously declined sedan chairs to demonstrate their regard for human labor. This practice was promoted by the emperors, who only extended the privilege to senior officials of high prestige¹² and those who were too sick to ride horses.¹³ The restrictions mandated by the Northern Song emperors applied to officials in the capital and also in the local regions.¹⁴ While attempting to restore the new central government in the south, Emperor Gaozong decided to expand this privilege to all officials as a token of appreciation for their hard service.¹⁵ Although the number of sedan chair users increased sharply in Gaozong's reign, the use of sedan chairs was still viewed as a privilege issued by the emperor to male officials in the early Southern Song as it had been in the Northern Song period. The history of the development of sedan chairs in the Song was thus a political issue couched in the official discourse of the monarch-subject relationship—though also, in the earlier period, as a moral issue surrounding the humane employment of human labor.

All the narrators of the above citations discussed the use of sedan chairs as a political issue and thus did not take women into account at all. Nevertheless, abundant textual and visual sources testify to rather widespread use of sedan chairs by Northern Song women. In fact, the Song male elite endorsed women's use of sedan chairs as a vehicle of gender segregation, for a sedan chair could function as a house in motion, sheltering the traveling women from public sight. In the *Song shi*, the appearance of sedan chairs is described in detail:

A sedan chair (*jian yu* 肩輿) was in square form, decorated with yellow and black paint, roofed with a protruding top, without girders, surrounded by bamboo mats, equipped with windows both on the left and right, covered with a screen at the front, and with two long poles attached [for porters] to carry it. Sedan chairs were called "bamboo palanquins" (*zhu jiao zi* 竹轎子) or "bamboo carriages" (*zhu yu* 竹輿).¹⁶

The sedan chair thus looked like an enclosed private room on poles, physically segregating the person inside from the people and space outside.¹⁷ A Northern Song scholar, Kong Wuzhong 孔武仲 (ca. 1041–ca. 1097), felt comfortable with his journey in a sedan chair and eulogized it in just this way:

The hanging screen is like a door.
The bamboo [poles] make [the sedan chair] a carriage.
A thousand-mile journey is like staying at home peacefully.¹⁸

The physical structure of sedan chairs made the rider inside feel as if he or she were still ensconced at home while being on the road. This illusive impression not only served to diminish women's possible confusion and anxiety caused by their entry into the unfamiliar male-dominant outer space, but also satisfied elite males' expectation that a woman should remain unseen in public. Women's use of sedan chairs was widely accepted by their male contemporaries throughout the Song period even while most men were not privileged to travel in this fashion in the Northern Song. Theoretically speaking, the house-like sedan chairs could function as a powerful material medium cultivating and enhancing the female users' consciousness of gender segregation. But in truth, no Song texts discuss the concern of gender in the invention and use of sedan chairs. Sedan chairs with a box-like structure are referred to as "warm sedan chairs" (*nuan jiao* 暖轎) in some documents, suggesting their original function of keeping riders warm on cold days.¹⁹ They were neither devised to enforce women's seclusion expected by Confucian idealists nor recommended by them to realize such a goal in the Song.²⁰

If sedan chairs functioned as symbols of hierarchy for the male elite, indicating state gentry's superior social identity in Northern Song official rhetoric, women's use of sedan chairs endowed the latter with gender implications outside the political discourse. According to the narratives in the *Reminiscences of the Eastern Capital* (*Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄), elite women in the Northern Song capital, Bianliang 汴梁 (modern Kaifeng), went on excursions in sedan chairs. Some decorated their vehicles with fresh flowers, and others removed the screen covers to enhance sightseeing.²¹ Similarly, in the genre painting *Spring Festival Along the River* (*Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河圖), which portrays the lively daytime activities in the capital, there are two sedan chairs conveying women.²² One is carried by two men, and a female passenger peeks

out onto the street from its right window (see Figure 2.1).²³ The other stops in front of a teahouse, and a maidservant is seen talking to the lady who remains behind the hanging screen (see Figure 2.2). In spite of taking similar sedan chairs, metropolitan women handled themselves on the road in differing ways. Some boldly abandoned the covering and exposed themselves in order to take pleasure in the scenery; some peered at the street furtively from a place of concealment; and some completely hid themselves in an enclosed movable house. Their contact with the outside world varied in degree, which might correspond to the degree of fear each individual woman felt about being observed by others or being thought to be unladylike. A sedan chair was furnished with a door and two windows, the standard accessories for houses, which provided the person inside with possibilities to access and communicate with the outside world. Therefore, besides functioning as an isolating cell, a sedan chair could also be transformed into an effective vehicle through which women could interact with the space beyond the *jia*.

Among the vehicles employed by Song women, sedan chairs consumed the most labor, time and money but were the most comfortable.²⁴ Ihara Hiroshi 伊原弘 studies the price of hiring a sedan chair in the Song and concludes that most commoners did not use it because of the relatively high cost.²⁵ The higher costs determined that sedan chairs were not suitable for long-distance journeys, and they were mostly used by upper-class women whose families could afford the expense. As a privilege granted to specific male officials, but a common experience for upper-class women in the Northern Song, taking sedan chairs became a



FIGURE 2.1. A woman in a sedan chair. Detail from the handscroll *Qingming shanghe tu* by Zhang Zeduan (fl. 1000–1130). The Palace Museum, Beijing.

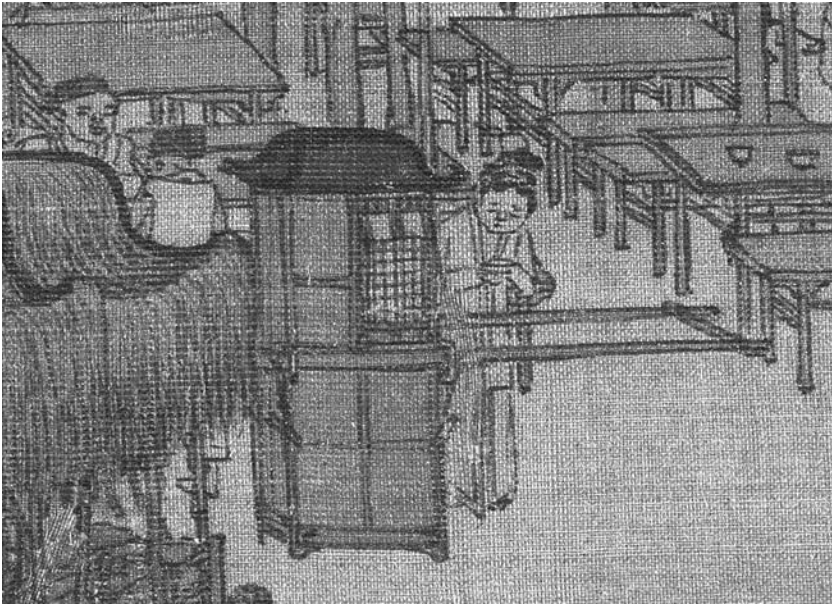


FIGURE 2.2. A maidservant in front of a sedan chair. Detail from the handscroll *Qingming shanghe tu* by Zhang Zeduan (fl. 1000–1130). The Palace Museum, Beijing.

form of cultural capital signaling the political authority of the male passengers and the family status of female ones. Throughout the Northern Song, it was thus appropriated by wealthy people of non-office-holding rank or of dubious background but aspiring to climb up. According to the records of the *Song shi*, four Northern Song emperors, in response to ministers' requests, issued edicts to ban the inappropriate use of sedan chairs among artisans, merchants, commoners, non-office-holding elite men, and aristocrats in 982, 1036, 1095, and 1117.²⁶ The ministers were eager to reserve it as a privilege offered to officials by the emperors.²⁷ The non-office-holding people's use of sedan chairs bothered the bureaucrats who continued to perceive the use of sedan chairs as a symbol of official status. In the memorial submitted to Emperor Huizong in 1117, the memorialist complained, "In the capital, people are busy competing in extravagance. . . . For example, commoners should not take sedan chairs. However nowadays in the capital, people without official titles, wealthy people, and lowly people like prostitutes and actors are used to

taking sedan chairs. . . . I believe [their behavior] oversteps the bounds of rites, exceeds their own responsibilities, and should be banned without any hesitation." Hence, an imperial decree was promulgated forbidding people, except for officials, to take sedan chairs.²⁸

The critical tone of this proposal was in conformity with that of earlier memorials submitted to other Northern Song emperors. From this document, we know that in the Northern Song, affluent people without office but with the means to afford it deliberately imitated the office-holding lifestyle, inspired by their newly found wealth to adopt the status symbols of those at the top of the political hierarchy. Their behavior disturbed the existing political order by challenging the authority of the state to grant certain privileges only to its office holders, and was thus criticized by male office holders.

Eventually, the non-office-holding men's use of sedan chairs was explicitly prohibited by the central government. In the 1117 memorial, to support his argument, the proposer cited the rule that "commoners should not take sedan chairs," which was announced by Emperor Renzong in 1036.²⁹ The "commoners" in this text and Emperor Renzong's edict simply meant "male commoners," at whom the author leveled most of his criticism. Although average women's use of sedan chairs was not directly addressed in Song official documents, an early Ming text provides us hints to understand women's special status in official rhetoric and their subsequent privilege of using sedan chairs in late imperial China. The first Ming emperor aimed at constructing an ordered hierarchical society, which resulted in the promulgation of strict and comprehensive sumptuary laws. In 1373, he issued an edict limiting the use of sedan chairs only to women as well as old and sick officials and commoners.³⁰ Like the Song decrees, the term *commoners* in this early Ming statute means "male commoners." The difference between the Northern Song and early Ming governments in dealing with women's use of sedan chairs is that the former viewed it as *de facto* and never institutionalized it, while the latter recognized it by legalization. In contrast to the Song state, which adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude toward women's everyday life, the Ming government was more conscious of women's presence in the sphere outside the *jia* and demonstrated more interest and authority in recognizing or regulating women's behaviors.

No explicit decrees were promulgated to regulate commoner women's use of sedan chairs in the Song. However, the government issued sumptuary laws to discriminate the adornment of sedan chairs used by high-class women. "Sedan chairs made of rattan and decorated with

silver were taken by women with official titles inside the imperial palace (*nei mingfu* 內命婦) and by imperial relatives. Sedan chairs made of rattan . . . were used by women with official titles both inside and outside the imperial palace (*neiwai mingfu* 內外命婦).³¹ The rule aimed at visually enforcing the hierarchy among women with official titles. It reserved the privilege of using silver-colored sedan chairs for imperial consorts on the one hand and implied the prevalent use of sedan chairs among officials' spouses on the other hand. The lack of codes prescribing the specific appearance of the sedan chairs used by official women made their differentiation from those used by female commoners predictably infeasible.

The memorialist of 1117 mentioned women riders of sedan chairs only when he provided prostitutes as an example of base people (*jian min* 賤民), who were below commoners in the social hierarchy. It seems that male gentry were untroubled by female commoners who took sedan chairs, although they opposed the same conduct by males. The reason for such contrasting attitudes might have been that the office-holding elite perceived male commoners as independent individuals who threatened their vested interests, while female commoners were seen as dependent members belonging to the *jia* and thus were excluded from the politico-social hierarchy that the male office holders endeavored to defend. Therefore, among female passengers who took sedan chairs, only social inferiors like prostitutes, who had left or been expelled from women's conventional place (the *jia*), aroused the male gentry's attention and disapproval: they transgressed the boundary between commoners and base people but not the one between male and female. They were condemned because of their class status rather than their gender. In the Northern Song male gentry's discourse, taking sedan chairs was discussed predominantly as a political issue, while its gender implications, which worked to the advantage of elite women, were seldom stated explicitly.

Women's use of sedan chairs—whether from the office-holding or commoner families—was uncontroversial in the Northern Song period, with the exception of those from the despised occupations. By the time of the Southern Song, with the ubiquitous use of sedan chairs among the populace, even prostitutes were assumed to have used them.³² Monetary income made taking sedan chairs affordable for commercialized female entertainers. And in comparison to elite women in the *jia*, courtesans who plied at entertaining businesses very likely considered the use of comfortable sedan chairs more useful and necessary. Although they were prohibited from taking sedan chairs in the Northern Song, their use of sedan

chairs became common and normal when this transportation mode spread quickly in the Southern Song. As Beverly Bossler has pointed out, the commodification of women became more prominent during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition. Courtesans’ ubiquitous presence in cities and countryside aroused unfavorable moral concerns and gave rise to a “generally negative view of courtesans as a group.”³³ But interestingly, in contrast to Northern Song statesmen who condemned courtesans’ use of sedan chairs as a transgression of social hierarchy, neither officials nor non-office-holding elites raised it as a serious issue in the Southern Song. They may have realized the proliferation of female entertainers was out of control, especially owing to the “privatization” of government courtesans and the compelling rise of nongovernment courtesans that Beverly Bossler has discovered.³⁴ In the eyes of elite men, unregulated courtesans, by taking sedan chairs, at least temporarily concealed their bodies and reduced the danger they posed to the public. The loss of their voice on the matter of courtesans’ use of sedan chairs seemed to be a compromise they made in an increasingly commercialized society.

For Song moralists who cared deeply about gender segregation, the increasing use of sedan chairs by contemporary women must have attracted their attention. But women taking sedan chairs in the Song period seldom encountered queries about breaking gender rules as long as they could afford it. The neo-Confucian master Zhu Xi witnessed the growing popularity of sedan chairs in his time, discussed it with his disciples occasionally, but never addressed its gender implications. His silence on this matter, which suggested his acquiescence rather than either promotion or condemnation of the use of sedan chairs among women, was typical among the Southern Song male elite. This curious silence may be understood in two ways: on the one hand, they did not encourage women to go outside no matter what vehicles they were going to employ; on the other hand, women’s use of sedan chairs as a sheltering house on the street rendered their criticism of women’s violation of gender boundary less biting. Facing such a dilemma, elite males might have found it hard to comment on women’s manipulation of sedan chairs, which resulted in their unusual speechlessness.

The service of sedan chairs was enjoyed by women residing throughout the Song empire, although its availability may have varied from place to place. At the local level in Fujian, no visual sources depicting sedan chairs survived from the Song dynasty. However, two sedan chairs drawn respectively on the walls of the two parallel chambers of a husband and a wife in an early Yuan mural tomb of Jiangle 將樂 county present precious material evidence on the similarity of sedan chairs used by men and

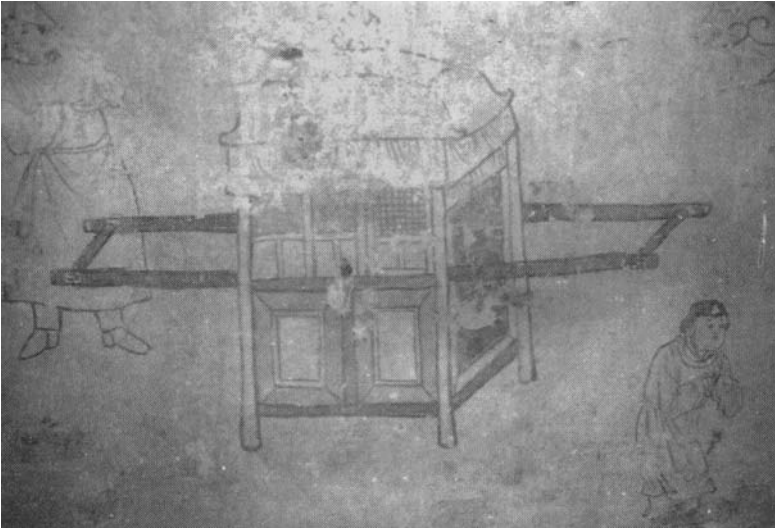


FIGURE 2.3. Sedan chair in the left chamber.

women in the late thirteenth century.³⁵ The sedan chair on the wall of the left chamber of the husband is surrounded by three male attendants (see Figure 2.3), while the one on the wall of the right chamber of the wife is accompanied by a maidservant (see Figure 2.4). They are both

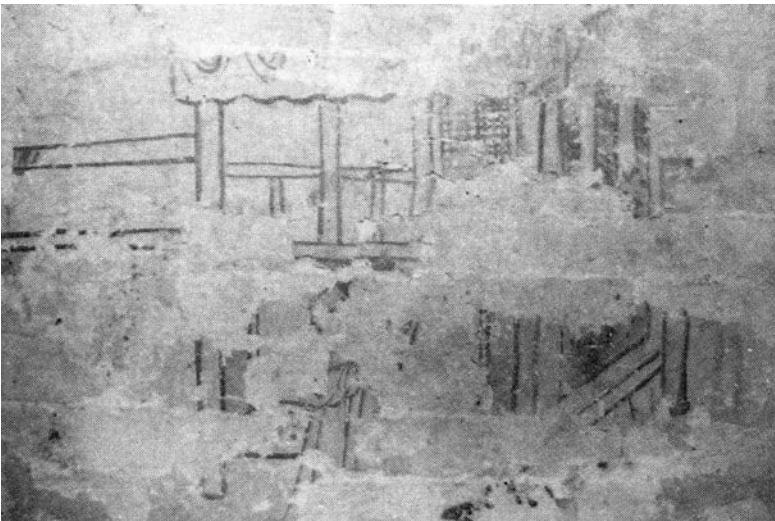


FIGURE 2.4. Sedan chair in the right chamber.

box-shaped containers furnished with two protruding poles. A screen is hung down in the front, a fabric canopy covers the top with a dripping valance, and the closed windows on the sides are decorated with grid frames. Although the two tomb occupants' companions disclose the passengers' gender, the sedan chairs themselves do not show any gendered differentiation. It seems women usually used the same sedan chairs as their male contemporaries did.

In addition to visual sources, primary texts from the Song also tell us what sedan chairs looked like in Fujian. Unlike the generic sedan chairs shared by men and women in northwest Fujian, there existed exceptional sedan chairs labeled as women's vehicles—apparently on the basis of their exteriors—in the eastern coastal areas. Zhuang Chuo 莊綽, a scholar-official who lived through the Northern and Southern Song transition, stated in the *Chicken Rib Collections* (*Jilei bian* 雞肋編) that

Quanzhou and Fuzhou women's sedan chairs were coated with golden lacquer. Female laborers were hired to carry these sedan chairs. In Fuzhou, these chairs were also carried by monks. Men other than monks did not like to bear these chairs.³⁶

Zhuang Chuo's singling out Quanzhou and Fuzhou women's sedan chairs for comment suggests that they were unusual. In most Song regions, there should have been no obvious distinction between men's and women's sedan chairs. In Fuzhou and Quanzhou, the distinct decoration of golden lacquer made women's sedan chairs look different from men's, which were presumably plain. Furthermore, women's sedan chairs in these two areas were only carried by female servants or by monks, who were religious specialists withdrawn from male commoners' mundane space.

Apart from the embellishment of golden lacquer on the exterior, the fact that women were carried mostly by female chair bearers was another local custom of Fuzhou and Quanzhou. They both served as warning to male bystanders that a woman was passing through, in a relatively secluded woman's place in the outer world. Furthermore, the female chair bearers and monks equipped for such services accompanied their passengers from the starting point to final destination. They provided necessary human labor for the physical conveyance of the sedan chairs, and they constituted symbolic human boundaries safeguarding a segregated place for the rider throughout the journey. The practice itself cohered with the expectation of gender segregation promoted by Confu-

cian moralists at the expense of confronting female chair bearers, who were presumably from lower-class families, with the public's overt gaze. The observance and violation of the ideal of gender segregation ironically coexisted, without causing male witnesses' and narrators' frustration. Elite men subjected their concern of gender to class difference and did not anticipate the practice of gender segregation as a universal rule, notwithstanding their high-toned claims in prescriptive writings. Moreover, Patricia Ebrey notices women were made "delicate, reticent, and stationary" in the Song and footbinding was the best way to accomplish it.³⁷ Nevertheless, the female carriers in Fujian contradicted the ideal image of soft and languid women that Ebrey discovers in Song men's poetry. They must have had no bound feet, being physically strong and characterized by constant mobility. Their work on the one hand was appreciated by the female consumers and very likely these women's male relatives, and on the other hand contributed to their own household finances. The increasing commercialization of women in the Song indicated not only men's consumption of women's sexual body and talent, which was applicable to courtesans and concubines, but also women's exploitation of women's physical strength and labor service, as is evident in the case of Fujian female carriers. Their features of economic independence and physical power made the definition of femininity much more complicated than what elite men pictured in literary works.

During the Song period, Fuzhou and Quanzhou were the two most developed prefectures in Fujian Circuit in terms of economy and culture. The existence of a substantial wealthy population in these two localities must have contributed to the widespread customs relating to women's sedan chairs. Unfortunately, the reason that Fuzhou and Quanzhou women's sedan chairs bore identifying adornment and dispensed with female chair bearers is not stated in Song documents. But the date of Zhuang Chuo's text gives us some hints to explore possible explanations. According to Zhuang Chuo's preface, the *Jilei bian* was completed in 1133. But some datable sources show new material was added until at least 1139. Zhuang Chuo's ancestors came from Quanzhou in Fujian, but he lived in North China and probably never visited Fujian before North China was conquered in 1127. Afterward, he took official positions in a number of places in South China but was never assigned to Fujian.³⁸ So it is impossible to determine whether the source about Fuzhou and Quanzhou women's sedan chairs was based on his own observation or what he heard from other people. Also, it is not clear whether what the source records was an indigenous custom of Fuzhou and Quanzhou in the

Northern Song period or an exotic new fashion that newcomers brought in during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition. If the source had been available before 1130, the unusualness of women's sedan chairs in Fuzhou and Quanzhou must have been an authentic local phenomenon that remains a mystery to be unraveled. But if Zhuang Chuo collected the source in the late 1130s, it opens a unique window for us to explore the encounter and interaction between imperial and local elite culture.

After the fall of the Northern Song, a large number of imperial members fled Kaifeng and resettled in Fujian. The temporary court ruled by Emperor Gaozong established two formal bureaus to manage their affairs in Fuzhou and Quanzhou in 1129.³⁹ These imperial immigrants, including roughly 200 men and 300 women,⁴⁰ brought in new wealth, received stipends from the court, and probably disseminated imperial ways of consumption. John Chaffee's meticulous study of imperial branches shows imperial relatives in the Northern Song lived in the lap of luxury because of the court's generous sponsorship. They were confined to either the palace or some sizable residential compounds designated by the emperors in the capital, and thus they were actively engaged in palace culture while isolated from the outside world.⁴¹ A tremendous rupture happened in 1127, when more than 3,000 imperial members were captured by the Jurchens and hundreds of imperial survivors made their way to south China. The two biggest centers where imperial relatives congregated were Fuzhou and Quanzhou, where they became increasingly integrated into the local elites.⁴² If Zhuang Chuo's source was added to the *Jilei bian* several years after the imperial members settled in these two places, it would be reasonable to assume that local sedan chairs changed style under the influence of the imported imperial culture. According to the *Song shi*, although imperial women's sedan chairs had no gold embellishment, their carriages drawn by cattle were ornamented with golden copper or lacquer,⁴³ which might have inspired the decoration of sedan chairs with extravagant gold lacquer. Furthermore, being raised in the forbidden palace, imperial women were very likely educated to care about gender segregation more seriously than women in average elite or commoner families. When eunuchs were unavailable, hiring female carriers or monks could have been alternative solutions. For native women in Fuzhou and Quanzhou, especially those from wealthy families, the aspiration for a royal lifestyle might have motivated their admiration for and imitation of imperial women's unusual practice, which gave rise to the widespread use of the "imperial fashion" at the local level.

Women carrying sedan chairs was not something unheard of in the history of Chinese palace life. For example, in the well-known seventh-century painting *Emperor Taizong Receiving the Tibetan Envoy* (*bunian tu* 步輦圖), the Tang Emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) sits on an open sedan, which is carried by two palace ladies. I assume female carriers did not exist in the palace of Kaifeng considering the Northern Song emperors' conservative attitudes toward the use of sedan chairs. But the change that some imperial women might have initiated in the early Southern Song Fujian was introduced to the palace afterward. The phenomenon of female laborers carrying women's sedan chairs gradually became a tradition in Fuzhou from the Song era on. In a comprehensive Ming-dynasty Fujian local gazetteer, the *Book of Min* (*Min shu* 閩書), it was noted in Fuzhou's records of local custom (*fengsu zhi* 風俗誌) that Fuzhou "women were good at carrying sedan chairs. At the beginning of the Hongwu 洪武 reign (1368–1398), thirty households of female sedan chair bearers (*nü jiao hu* 女轎戶) were summoned to the capital to serve imperial women in the inner palace."⁴⁴ In the eyes of the first Ming emperor in the fourteenth century, female carriers fit into the imperial palace culture. Female laborers carrying women's sedan chairs developed into a specialized profession; their households were administratively controlled by the Fuzhou local government even more than 200 years after Zhuang Chuo's record.

Besides sedan chairs, carriages were also widely employed by Song women. According to Meng Yuanlao's *Dongjing menghua lu*, in Northern Song Bianliang, "the large carriages were called 'peaceful carriages (*taiping che* 太平車).' An uncovered chamber was loaded on [each carriage]. The chamber was like a flat railing set. Two beams stretched out from the [parallel chamber] walls made of wooden blocks [at the sides]. . . . Flat-topped carriages (*pingtou che* 平頭車) were like peaceful carriages, but smaller. . . . Carriages carrying women from the inner quarters looked similar to flat-topped carriages. But they were covered with palm roofs and equipped with railings both at the front and back. Screens were hung at the entrance."⁴⁵ There were a variety of carriages moving on the streets of the capital. The shapes of those used by women resembled the peaceful carriages and flat-topped carriages that were used to transport goods, but they were fully covered to conceal the passengers. Meng identified them as "carriages carrying women from the inner quarters," but it does not mean that women were the exclusive riders of covered carriages. Contemporary men also used carriages, which I presume were likely to

be the same as what women used. Men could not have used unsecured and uncovered carriages for the sake of safety and comfort on journey. The reason Meng attributed these carriages to women is probably that in the capital men usually rode animals and seldom used carriages, a means of transport that they often reserved for long-distance travels.⁴⁶

In addition to Meng Yuanlao's memoir, a Southern Song scholar, Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210), also described the halcyon days of Bianliang and the impressiveness of women's carriages in his *Miscellanea from the Retreat of Study in Old Age* (*Laoxuean biji* 老學庵筆記). On holidays, all imperial family members went to the imperial palace to celebrate. Women promenaded in cattle-drawn carriages (*du che* 犢車). Two maid-servants held incense balls at the women's sides, and the women also placed an incense ball in each sleeve. As the carriages drove by, fragrant smoke appeared like clouds that trailed for several miles. Even the dust on the road was aromatized.⁴⁷ Women's refined images and mysterious smell contributed to Lu You's imaginative reconstruction of the capital as a prosperous, beautiful, and luxurious wonderland after it fell to the hands of Jurchen "barbarians" in 1127. The shape and ornament of the carriages were not described. It was women's presence, whether they stood outside or sat inside, rather than the unstated physical features that made the carriages attractive and worthy of record, from Lu You's point of view. According to Beverly Bossler, Southern Song authors' anecdotes of Northern Song courtesans reflect their "nostalgia for the remembered (and imagined) glories of the Northern Song bureaucratic elite."⁴⁸ In contrast to courtesans who were fully engaged in elite social activities, women from elite families and imperial women in the Northern Song spent most of their life in the inner quarters. But like courtesans, their movement in the public space constituted memorable experience in Southern Song male authors' reconstruction of the metropolitan life. Both Meng Yuanlao's and Lu You's accounts suggest that in the Northern Song capital, carriages were popular transportation for women who occasionally needed to leave their *jia*. Furthermore, in the painting of *Qingming shanghe tu*, we can see several carriages drawn by cattle, whose appearance exactly conforms to the detailed descriptions in textual material given above (see Figure 2.5).

Like sedan chairs, these canopied carriages also functioned as relatively enclosed places for women while the screens at the entrances provided women an accessible channel to explore the outside world. In the *Collected Anecdotes and Trifles of Song* (*Song bai lei chao* 宋稗類鈔), there is an anecdote about Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061), who was a

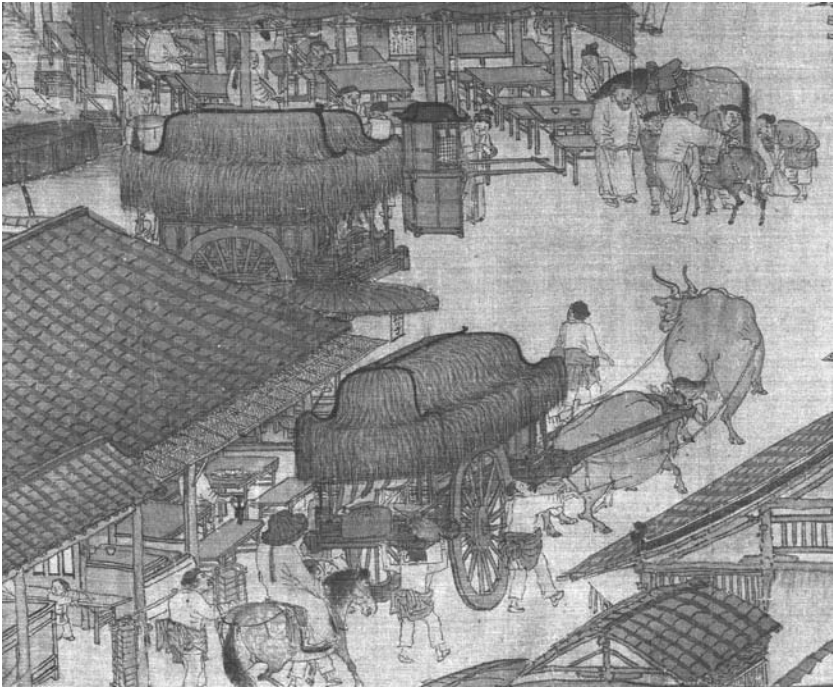


FIGURE 2.5. Two cattle-drawn carriages. Detail from the handscroll *Qingming shanghe tu* by Zhang Zeduan (fl. 1000–1130). The Palace Museum, Beijing.

famous scholar-official in the middle Northern Song period. One day, when Song Qi passed through Fantai 繁臺 Street, he encountered a carriage from the inner palace.⁴⁹ Someone in the carriage lifted up the screen and said, “It is Little Song.” After Song Qi came back home, he composed a lyric:

[I] met an extremely decorated carriage on the narrow street.
 A heartbroken call came out from the embroidered screen. . . .
 Gold is used to make the chamber.
 Jade is used to make the cage.
 Carriages moved like flowing water, and horses ran like free
 dragons.⁵⁰

The court lady was situated in a luxurious enclosed carriage on the street. Behind the screen, she saw Song Qi accidentally. She lifted up the

screen and yelled at him, which caught his attention. Song Qi did not get a chance to see her, but her voice inspired his literary imagination. In Song Qi's writing, the carriage was compared to a chamber, room, cage, or even prison made of valuable materials, which was characterized by closure and restraint. When the screen was lifted, passersby had the opportunity to inquire into what was inside. Once it was hung, the transitory connection established between passengers and passersby was shut down. In both Lu You's narrative and Song Qi's story, elite men did not come up with any gender and moral concerns regarding women's use of carriages that modern scholars are likely to assume. On the contrary, women's hidden images behind the screen as well as their aroma and voice disseminated out of the carriages aroused elite males' curiosity and fantasy about invisible women in the public space.

Like sedan chairs outside of Fuzhou and Quanzhou, carriages in the Song period did not display distinctive gendered characteristics. However, in contrast to most sedan chairs, which garnered little attention and received limited textual record, the exteriors of carriages were used by Song people to demonstrate and even exaggerate their class status.⁵¹ A carriage's exterior decoration was related to a passenger's status only, and that gender was invisible in this context. Explicating the employment of carriages among upper-class women, the *Song shi* records,

As for the vehicles for women with official titles inside or outside the imperial palace . . . according to Song rules . . . carriages drawn by cattle and ornamented with golden copper or lacquer, covered with felt or palm fiber, were used by women with official titles both inside and outside the imperial palace.⁵²

According to the text, the decorations of women's carriages should conform to their status. Thus carriages used by women with official titles were ornamented with golden copper or lacquer; it was acknowledged as these women's privilege, which distinguished them from female passengers without official titles. There is no original material documenting whether or not their spouses took the same carriages as they did, which makes the possibly gender-signifying exterior decoration ambiguous. However, even without supplementary sources, these decorations could be at least perceived as visible indications for official status, as stated in the above imperial edicts.⁵³

Apart from vehicles, Song women also rode animals such as horses and donkeys, just as men did.⁵⁴ In contrast to sedan chairs and carriages,

these modes of transportation did not provide female passengers with a closed structure to conceal their bodies. Therefore, some women wore veils to relieve their embarrassment (or perhaps that of male observers) in such a circumstance. In a Song encyclopedia, the *Record of the Origins of Objects* (*Shiwu jiyuan* 事物紀原), Gao Cheng 高承 (late eleventh century) referred to such veils when he explained the origin of a hat with a hanging veil (*wei mao* 帷帽): “Nowadays . . . there are veils [*mian yi* 面衣, literally translated as ‘facial clothes’].” A whole piece of purple gauze is hung on a hat from the front to the back. Four ribbons with different colors hang down on shoulders. They are used by women who ride horses for an excursion.”⁵⁵ In the painting *Qingming shanghe tu*, we can see a donkey-riding woman whose face is covered by such a hanging veil (see Figure 2.6). Actually, the veils were not merely used by women when they went on long journeys. In the *Miscellaneous Record from Qingbo Gate* (*Qingbo zazhi* 清波雜志), Zhou Hui 周輝 (1126–?) recorded that “when



FIGURE 2.6. A woman riding a donkey. Detail from the handscroll *Qingming shanghe tu* by Zhang Zeduan (fl. 1000–1130). The Palace Museum, Beijing.

women walk on the street, they use a whole piece of purple gauze to cover their upper body. It is called 'head cover (*gai tou* 蓋頭)' by the folk. It follows the style of the hat with a hanging veil (*wei mao*) from the Tang dynasty."⁵⁶ In the early and middle Tang period, it was fashionable for aristocratic women to wear hats with hanging veils for excursions, a practice they borrowed from northwestern nomadic males. This fashion gradually declined and finally disappeared in the eighth century,⁵⁷ was revived in the tenth century,⁵⁸ and was continued by the Song women, who were probably unaware of its barbaric and masculine origin.

In the Song anecdotes, several stories describe veil-wearing women with various identities, such as unmarried young elite girls,⁵⁹ a village lady,⁶⁰ an official's wife,⁶¹ a doctor's maidservant,⁶² and a concubine,⁶³ from many different places. Class, wealth, and locality did not differentiate women in their use of veils, which, compared to transportation vehicles, were cheap and widely available. The fundamental function of veils was to prevent wind and dust on the journey. While without the protection of enclosed vehicles like sedan chairs and carriages, Song women could—and sometimes were recommended to—rely on them to block a male passerby's view when riding on the street. Although women users did not leave us records of their personal feelings about wearing veils, the refined semitransparent fabric as well as decorative and colorful ribbons added to women's beauty, conveyed their aesthetic sense, and suggested veils' significance in fashioning women's everyday life.

We unfortunately lack local material to examine Fujian women's use of veils in the Song. But interestingly, some late Qing Fujian local gazetteers attributed the custom of wearing veils among Qing women in south Fujian to Zhu Xi's advocacy.⁶⁴ No textual sources show that Zhu Xi promoted such a practice among women while serving on the post of the magistrate of Tong'an County, but the veils were called "Mr. Wengong (Zhu Xi) veil (*wengong dou* 文公兜)" by Fujian people in late imperial China. It seems that Zhu Xi was credited with the invention of veils for Fujian women because women's use of veils conformed to the ideal of gender segregation, which by the early nineteenth century had been perceived as Zhu Xi's idea in the popular psyche. The Qing elite writers, in claiming the false connection, distorted Zhu Xi's flexible gender notions and tolerant attitude toward women and reconceptualized them as rigid expectations for female chastity.

Literati in late imperial China essentialized its connection to gender separation, whereas the practice of veiling in the Song ironically carried erotic implications in some cases.⁶⁵ In the *Qingming shanghe tu*,

the woman who rides a donkey wears a see-through veil, and her facial features are clearly depicted. A veil made of light and thin textile material was not supposed to block a woman traveler's view,⁶⁶ but I suspect the painter exaggerated the transparency of the veil for the purpose of revealing the rider's gender identity. From the perspective of audience, such a veil does not have any function of visual concealment, which is nevertheless a core issue that other sources address while dealing with women's veiling. In many anecdotes, men were reportedly unable to see a woman's face clearly behind an opaque or translucent veil, while she could see and communicate with them. Such an ambiguous intermediate status between concealment and discernibility is provocative. Men may have found a mysterious semiconcealed woman attractive while probably at the same time dangerous.⁶⁷ If sedan chairs, carriages, and veils provided for a degree of gender segregation in the public space, they also piqued men's imagination and encouraged male fantasies.

Although the *jia* was Song women's legitimate inner place, staying in the *jia* all the time was inconceivable for most women. But in an idealized representation of public life, women were seldom seen, as is evident in the *Qingming shanghe tu*. Therefore, when they physically departed from their *jia* to enter the outside world, they might encounter their male contemporaries' disapproval and arouse their own frustration and anxiety. Using vehicles that provided some concealment was a means to resolve such a dilemma. Nevertheless, women's use of vehicles was not decided by their gender identity, nor were enclosable vehicles created for the sake of women's confinement. Women availed themselves of multiple vehicles just as men did in the Song period. The most common vehicles, sedan chairs and carriages, were designed as moving houses and functioned as practical objects demarcating women's relatively secluded place in the open space outside the *jia*. They were widely accepted as women's means of transportation not only because of the comfort they provided but because they conformed to Confucian men's ideal image of the secluded women.

The use of such vehicles is always a double-edged sword. While sedan chairs and carriages provided female passengers with both restriction and protection, just as the *jia* did in their everyday life, the movable components, such as windows and screens, offered female passengers the opportunity to observe the outside world. Confucian scholars witnessed and accepted women's employment of vehicles and realized the difficulty of making moral judgments on such matters. They thus hesitated to either attack or support the practice. The prevalent use of these vehicles

by Song women indicates that the boundary between inner and outer was mobile and not confined to a concrete wall and gate physically separating the bounds of the *jia* from the world outside. House-like vehicles such as sedan chairs and carriages extended the inner/outer boundary and expanded women's traditional space, but at the same time they allowed the practical continuation of gender segregation in the male-dominant outside space. Likewise, the use of veils while on the back of horses, donkeys, or mules could also be interpreted as women's endeavor to extend gender segregation outside the *jia* at the same time as it testified to the flexibility of the inner/outer boundary.

Most Song vehicles bore no physical marks of gendered specificity. They were not gendered in the processes of production and circulation. However, during the process of consumption, such vehicles as sedan chairs received separate treatment by male and female users and observers. Men's employment of sedan chairs was interpreted in Song political discourse and linked to the passengers' bureaucratic identities, and it only became a popular practice after the central government moved to the south. Compared with their male contemporaries, Northern Song women enjoyed more freedom in taking sedan chairs, as they were defined as dependent and vulnerable individuals peripheral to the political system. In contrast to sedan chair passengers, the class identities of carriage passengers did not attract official attention. Carriages were commonly enjoyed by men or women who could afford them with neither class nor gender distinction. Yet upon closer observation, the exteriors of carriages were manipulated as a form of cultural capital to signal the economic and social status of the passengers, whether they were male or female. In light of its inevitable visual nature, the use of sedan chairs and carriages was treated as a political and economic, rather than gender, issue in Song governmental and elite male discourses. Without independent political identities and with limited economic rights,⁶⁸ Song women's class status and the social resources that they could utilize were determined exclusively by their family background. They could temporarily leave their *jia* and individually enjoy modes of transportation and the accompanying labor services in the outside space, but at the same time, these covered vehicles embodied the unbreakable connection between these female passengers and their *jia* even in the outer world.

Of course, many Song women on journeys did not use any vehicles, as is evident in abundant primary sources. Most of these were probably from poorer families who could not afford the expense. In contrast to those female travelers who could hide themselves behind vehicle screens

and thus display their conformity to the ideology of gender segregation while under the critical observation of the public, these women simply exposed themselves to the public gaze. The female sedan chair bearers of Fuzhou and Quanzhou are good examples. For these and other women who had to shoulder the household financial burdens together with their male family members, the anxiety of poverty, or simply the need for gainful employment or trade, outweighed the concern for gender segregation. The supposition of women's reclusive images was compromised, and thus the inner/outer boundary that elite women were taught to keep in mind ceased to matter in these women's everyday lives.

Traces

In the male-dominant outside space, Song men enjoyed abundant freedom.⁶⁹ For Song elite males, inscribing signed literary or calligraphic pieces at visited landmarks in order to commemorate their trips and display their talents was a prevalent custom. In contrast to these male contemporaries, women's standard living space was their *jia*, and their occasional and transitory activity in the outside space usually left little trace after they left the sites of their activity. However, in the vast outer world, besides the abundant material texts created by elite males, some textual traces do survive from either male or female writers recording women's once palpable presence.

A long trip usually included several stops at inns or temples.⁷⁰ For Song women moving in the extra-*jia* sphere, vehicles like sedan chairs and carriages functioned as movable semi-houses concealing their bodies in the movement from place to place, while accommodations such as inns and temples provided them with temporary rooms available for relatively stable and private occupancy. Therefore, even though they entered the male-dominant outer world, they could still preserve the privacy that they enjoyed in the inner quarters. Women made the most of the privacy that these public places provided during a certain period, and some even wrote poems on the walls of the inns where they stayed.⁷¹ For example, in the early Southern Song, in Fujian Shaowu Command's Mokou post house 邵武漢口舖, a certain Han Yunu 韓玉奴⁷² is recorded to have inscribed a poem on a wall:

[I] crossed thousands of mountains going south,	南行踰萬山
Again I entered Wuyang Road.	復入武陽路
[I] was woken by cocks in the dawn,	黎明與雞興

Combed my hair at Mokou post house.	理髮漠口舖
Where is the Xu River ⁷³ ?	盱江在何所
As far as my eyes can see are mist and clouds.	極目烟水暮
[I]’ve been careful in guarding my morality	
all my life,	生平良自珍
And ashamed of being the wife of a libertine.	羞為浪子婦
[I] know you are not like Qiu Hu ⁷⁴ ,	知君非秋胡
And am going west with a forced smile.	強顏且西去

This is a poem in a woman’s voice, and can be classified as abandonment complaints in terms of literary genre.⁷⁵ The author prefaced it with an account of Han Yunu’s experience and situation:

My family originated from Qin 秦. My grandfather evaded the chaos there and moved to Qiantang 錢塘. When I was little, Adept Yi’an, Li Qingzhao 易安居士李清照, taught me to write poems. After [my hair] was pinned, my parents married me to Lin Zijian 林子建, a Fujian student of National Academy. Last year, Lin was assigned to an official post and returned to Fujian. I gave him all my savings to support his trip. Lin promised me that he would send horses to welcome me in the autumn or winter. I have not had any information from him ever since. Alas, he has broken his word. Thus I took a maidservant and traveled from Qiantang to Sanshan 三山 [Fuzhou 福州]. When I arrived, Lin had left for his new post in Xu Jiang 盱江; so I returned to Yanping 延平, and continued my trip [to Xu Jiang] via Shunchang 順昌 and Shaowu. I sighed about the boring journey and laughed at abnormal occurrences in human life. Therefore, I randomly inscribed several words on the wall of the Mokou post house while combing my hair.⁷⁶

Han Yunu, the protagonist of the narrative, describes the difficulties on the road, presents her virtuous image, and complains about her callous husband. She composes “a spatial story” with her poem, in which she deliberately marks the sites she passed one after another, and she uses these trustworthy geographic details to present her readers with a virtual contour of her journey and to lead them to perceive the hardship of her trip and her misery on the road.⁷⁷ Furthermore, she presents comprehensive personal information about herself and her husband in

the preamble. She elaborates on her family origin, education, marriage and economic status, and her husband's name and career in the introduction to support her argument in the poem and convince audiences of the authenticity of her story. At this time, inns functioned as scattered information centers in the broad national communication network, and inn rooms differed from women's private inner chambers in the *jia* in that the former could accommodate guests of diverse class and gender identities. Unrelated people from various backgrounds converged at inns, and their activities here were staged as public "performances and observations," in Ya-ting Wu's words.⁷⁸ This poem is more a deliberate creation guiding the audience in reconstructing a woman's personal experience than a simple product of a woman's self-expression. Thus, although the readership of poems inscribed on inn walls was casual and unpredictable, Han Yunu's story could be spread everywhere through the circulation of guests at the Mokou post house.

In spite of Han Yunu's autobiographical preface and its genuine geographic information, the existence of this very woman as a historical figure is suspicious.⁷⁹ Men writing as women had a long tradition in Chinese literary history. As Maija Bell Samei points out, "among the repertoire of feminine voices to impersonate, male poets seemed to have a particular attraction to or affinity for the voice of the lonely, suffering woman—the *qifu* 棄婦, abandoned woman or wife,"⁸⁰ a convention within which Han Yunu's poem falls. "Strong female complaints which ridicule or blame men for abandonment or unfaithfulness . . . might be seen to be more popular in character, having a certain bawdiness and entertainment value, but they do not necessarily reflect female authorship."⁸¹ Wai-yee Li employs a poem prefaced with an autobiography left on the walls of a temple in the seventeenth century to exemplify how a displaced woman's image "becomes a fictive or allegorical mask" for a male writer when "authenticated by victimhood."⁸² The poem composed five centuries earlier by "Han Yunu" seems to have functioned in a similar way. The author's adoption of the formulaic trope of an abandoned wife, claim of personal connection to the celebrity Li Qingzhao,⁸³ as well as skillful manipulation of information to uphold the reliability of the poem make me suspect that it might be an example of a Song male poet's writing in a fictive guise.

Were the poet a man, this Han Yunu poem would tell us "not of how women think or feel, but how such male authors perceive women: how they think, or fancy, or would have it, that women think and feel," as feminist critics suggest.⁸⁴ The male author constructs the image of

an abandoned wife—Han Yunu—represents her experience, and reveals female psychology in an imaginative way. From his perspective, on the one hand, the room in the Mokou post house where Han Yunu stays momentarily transforms into her inner chamber as she combs her hair there in the morning. She enjoys the freedom to take advantage of the place. On the other hand, this post house room is not her permanent dwelling but just one stop on a long journey. The unfamiliar setting of the room might remind her that she has been moving around far away from the *jia*. The distressing cause and unpleasant experience of her trip makes her feel uneasy and stimulates her to manipulate the wall as a material medium to write down her miserable story and express her strong emotion. The male writer hidden behind the scene does not question the propriety of a woman's reluctant journey, and he projects such a tolerant attitude upon the self-expressive female protagonist.⁸⁵ He does not expect a woman, when encountering hardships in the sphere outside the *jia*, to feel an obligation to add conventional bemoaning of the inappropriateness of her being out of the inner quarters. Therefore, Han Yunu does not say anything at all about separation from her *jia* in the poem: she complains at having a libertine husband and at having to travel a long distance to catch up with him; in the preface she complains about the length and tedium of the journey. Her complaint is much more specific than the fear or dislike of being outside the *jia*, which a woman might or might not feel. Furthermore, the poems of abandoned complaints usually stage an abandoned woman in a bedchamber—an emblem of her sorrowful condition, which may also explain why “Han Yunu” does not mention a word about house or home or needing to be safe and sound there.

Song literary writings inscribed on inn walls and attributed to women, we presume, originated from what women experienced or what men assumed women would experience on the road. As Cong Zhang's study of Song inn-wall writings shows, “compared to the large quantity of complaints by male literati about travel life and physical dislocations, the tone of the surviving women's original writings conveys a deeper sense of helplessness.”⁸⁶ But it is questionable whether poems that were written in a woman's voice or had a woman's signature could all be labeled as “women's original writings.” Considering the men's real authorship of many such writings, the more frequent description of the disagreeable predicaments that so-called female writers encountered on the journey might have resulted from a common topos—when men wrote in a woman's voice, they were inclined to exaggerate their

helplessness. Han Yunu's dissatisfaction with the awkward situation in the sphere outside the *jia* is not a general complaint about how much easier it is for a woman to be in a *jia* than to be on the road. However, the male author's assumption of a woman's vulnerability on the journey might give rise to the overwhelming feeling of helplessness embodied in the persona of a displaced woman—Han Yunu.

In comparison to Song female authors, male writers had better knowledge of the interest and expectation of poem readers—mostly elite men who shared the same culture with them.⁸⁷ Men's authorship gave rise to the prevalence of certain motifs of the inn-wall poems in a woman's voice: women's misery caused by domestic tragedies or social turmoil. Such poems were collected and preserved in contemporary or later books not because of their literary achievements but for the authors' impressive "personal" experiences. Some of them satisfied men's curiosity about women's family life, like Han Yunu's poem did. Others presented women's experiences and complaints that were rather representative among their contemporaries regardless of gender. Such poems resonated with elite males, as evidenced by responses from plentiful contemporaneous readers.⁸⁸

Not all Song inn-wall writings in female voice bear the signatures of women writers as Han Yunu's poem does. Many of them are anonymous and are very likely men's compositions in a woman's voice. Judith Zeitlin has questioned the authenticity of many poems written on walls (*tibishi* 題壁詩) from the Ming-Qing transition, and the same skepticism applies to the Song period.⁸⁹ The credibility of female authorship has aroused not only the attention of feminist literary theorists but also that of Song male writers.

Hong Mai 洪邁 commented on an unsigned poem that describes a depressed woman's unpleasant journey after departing her *jia* reluctantly to escape the war between Song and Jin: "the calligraphy was soft and weak, truly a woman's handwriting. And the wall [on which the poem was written] was full of responses."⁹⁰ The narrator evoked the calligraphic style to prove the authenticity of the author's female identity. The argument that an author's gender could be told from his or her calligraphic style is not tenable, based on recent scholars' study of Chinese art history.⁹¹ No matter Hong Mai's conclusion, his suspicious attitude suggested that he (and, perhaps, the narrator who told him the story) assumed that some poems created in women's names might not actually be women's work. However, both the suspicion and the elite men's serious investigation and discussion of a woman's authorship also

imply that they believed that poems composed by contemporary women and inscribed on inn walls did exist. It was based on such a presumption that the male observers and commentators developed their confidence in identifying the female authorship of inn-wall writings, although Hong Mai's conclusion might not hold true.

During the Song period, though the art of literature was claimed by many men as a field legitimate for men only, many Song women from elite families were offered the opportunity to learn fundamental literary skills, including the writing of poems.⁹² Although elite males held quite diverse attitudes toward women's literary production, generally speaking, women's writing was not promoted.⁹³ In contrast to male scholars, who treated poems as an important textual medium for communication among members of the elite, many female authors insisted that writing theoretically was not women's work and that they would not share their compositions with others. Women's poems inscribed on inn walls were thus essentially different from women's literary creations in the inner chambers. The latter could either be kept to themselves or be distributed among their own or their male relatives' social circles, depending on their intentions, whereas the former were deliberately composed to be appreciated by unacquainted travelers, and in this respect appear to be exceptional examples among women's writings. For literate women, private inn rooms blocked public gaze and provided them with temporarily segregated places resembling their inner chambers in the *jia* to compose their literary works. Contextualized in such places, women might have felt relatively safe and thus able to express their anxiety. As Ronald Egan's investigation of women's inn-wall poems shows, "often, the writing is done in a moment of emotional crisis, when it seems that the woman simply has to express herself."⁹⁴ Inscribing literary work on walls thus appears to have been one way for some elite women to relieve their frustration caused by the disordered lives. At the same time, they were on the road and far away from their *jia* and local communities. In the outer world, the decline of the sense of family roles and the absence of family members' supervision might have eased the anxiety about the justification for poetry writing that they usually felt in the *jia*. It is thus conceivable that public inns, being situated outside the *jia*, offered Song women more freedom in exercising their literary skills and expressing their views in writing than did their inner *jia*.

Apart from compositions inscribed on inn walls, Song elite women's writings were rarely visible in the wider social space. Song elite males were fond of visiting places famous for their scenery and historic relics,

and leaving poems or inscriptions at these scenic spots was a popular practice among them;⁹⁵ in contrast, the absence of female travel writings at the same locations suggests that the practice was not prevalent among elite women in the Song period. Women's presence at places of interest was sometimes mentioned in the inscriptions left there by men; however, they usually were referred to simply as family members who participated in the journey. For example, on Mount Gu 鼓山, a well-known scenic site in the suburb of Fuzhou, countless inscriptions were produced in the Song period and recorded in later printed collections, yet are still well-preserved and clearly discernable today.⁹⁶ Some of the inscriptions transmitted the message that Song elite women enjoyed the beautiful landscape as much as elite males did. An inscription dated 1206 reads as follows:

In late spring, Chen Jingren, his nephews Ziyu, Ziyang, and Lin Gai; his younger brothers Pu and Diao; his sons Xuan, Ji, and Chuo; Chen Zeshan; Li Qiwei; and Pan Changru brought [their] *jia* here for an outing. 暮春，陳景仁，侄子愚、子盈、林諒，弟樸、調，男絢、紀、綽，陳擇善，李起渭，潘昌孺挈家來游。⁹⁷

Chen Jingren was a local scholar who, in the spring of 1206, arranged a tour to Mount Gu. There were dozens of tourists participating in the trip, including three nephews, two younger brothers, and three sons whose names were recorded in the inscription. As most of them were Chen Jingren's intimate relatives, Chen Zeshan, Li Qiwei, and Pan Changru—the other three men whose identities were not presented beyond their names—were probably either Chen Jingren's distant relatives or close friends. In the inscription, the female relatives of all of these men were simply summarized in one syllable: *jia*. As I have stated in the first chapter, the *jia* was a rather complicated concept in traditional China. In the context of this inscription, the *jia* was an abbreviation of the word *jia ren*, which literally meant "family members" but referred to female family members and perhaps children in the inscription. When the *jia* was related to family members, it was supposed to be interpreted as a kinship organization encompassing both male and female family members. However, in this inscription, the scope of the *jia* was narrowed down with precise gender separation. It meant essentially "dependents," and women were being treated as dependents and thus more essentially *jia*-connected than men, just as children were. Of course, the *jia*

was never discussed as an exclusively male concept throughout China's imperial era. The traditional implications of the *jia* were modified and gendered in this specific context, which indicated that Song elite males were inclined to link the *jia* with female kin, who did not have independent social status and had to rely on their affiliations to the *jia* for self-identification in everyday life. In Song elite males' minds, women might have had stronger connections with the *jia* than men did.

The verb preceding the *jia* was *qie* 挈 "to take along," which is suggestive of men's dominant roles in the outside space. Females (and perhaps children) were identified as simply passive followers of male adults. In exploring Song primary sources related to traveling, one finds that the term *qie jia* 挈家 appeared in many inscriptions and poems. For example, at the same scenic site of Mount Gu, in the spring of 1251, Shi Jiwen 史季溫, the local administrator of Fujian, left a poem acclaiming the beautiful scenery view from the peak. In the postscript, he stated that he *qie jia* for a tour at Mount Gu.⁹⁸ These inscriptions suggest that Song elite women were offered the opportunities to take pleasure in natural scenery along with their male relatives and even these relatives' male friends. As Susan Mann argues, "these journeys by families in motion continually bent the spatial boundaries marking off the domestic realm (*nei*) where women were supposed to preside."⁹⁹ However, in these commemorative texts the names of male kin were written down, whereas those of female kin were not. Their identities were deliberately blurred. They were treated in a general way as a dependent group without any individual characteristics and as inferior to their male family members, identified by their exact positions and rankings in the *jia*.

As Song elite women traveled and enjoyed scenic sites and landscapes with male family members, they received at best oblique mentions in the commemorative inscriptions left by elite males. An extensive survey of surviving Song inscriptions in Fujian fails to present any travel inscriptions composed or handwritten by women. But one such example was available from the late Qing period. One inscription at the scenic site of Mount Gu reads as follows:

In the winter of the Guiyou year during Emperor Tongzhi's reign (1873), Houguan Lady Yan Huihuai took (*qie* 挈) Daughters Chen Meiyi, Ye Wenqin, Chen Shizhu, niece Zheng Zhongnian, and the Wife of Nephew He Jingrong, Cheng Lingheng to Mount Gu for traveling. The third Son-in-law,

Chen Maohou, and Nephews Guo Diaochang and [Guo] Jichang attended. Inscribed by Shuzhu in seal script.¹⁰⁰

The Song and Qing inscriptions at Mount Gu, although about 600 years apart, shared the same template. The use of the verb *qie* persisted into the nineteenth century, but the protagonist who led the travel in the Qing inscription was a senior elite woman rather than a senior man by default in the Song sources. In contrast to the silent and unidentifiable female travelers in the Song texts, a number of women played dominant roles in the Qing trip. They organized, enjoyed, and immortalized their journey, while three male relatives merely served as “attendants” in their writing. Women’s such active images conformed to the prosperity of what Dorothy Ko depicts as kin-based women’s “domestic” communities in late imperial China.¹⁰¹ Notwithstanding the spread of women’s education and many elite women’s high literacy, no extant sources suggest that women’s communities established upon shared literary interest had taken shape in the Song Fujian.¹⁰²

In spite of the large number of Song inscriptions at scenic spots, however, Song elite women’s writings are never found at these popular places of interest. This was not only determined by the fact that men dominated the literary field and the outside space but also related to some elite women’s self-consciousness and intentional effort to keep themselves outside of men’s territory. The case of Zou Miaozi 鄒妙莊, the wife of a late Southern Song scholar official Yao Mian 姚勉 (1216–1262), serves as a good example explicating Song elite women’s concern over leaving literary productions openly in the public space. Although she lived in Jiangxi, Fujian’s adjacent circuit, her family had a close connection to Zhu Xi. She loved reading poems, and her favorite was Zhu Xi’s *Ten Eulogies of Mount Wuyi* (*Wuyi shiyong* 武夷十詠). She enjoyed reading them aloud emotionally and expressed her passion for traveling. It is unknown whether or not she visited Mount Wuyi in Fujian. But she married Yao Mian, who shared her interest for traveling, and they sometimes had excursions together. In the epitaph he wrote for her, he recalled,

Meizhuang 梅莊 and I passed Yue Cliff 月巖 in Xin 信, and loved the wonderful view. She led concubines and maid-servants in climbing up elegantly. She looked like a fairy as I looked at her from behind. When we reached the cliff, I

asked her to write down the date to commemorate our trip. She composed a poem there, which said:

The half cliff extends to heaven, a column leaning	
on air,	半壁行天柱倚空
Here among humans is this Guanghan	
Palace.	人間有此廣寒宮
Now it really looks like a moon hanging	
in the sky,	從今真似天邊月
It once received Fairy Chang E's arrival.	曾得嫦娥到此中

She herself chose a place uninfluenced by wind and rain, and inscribed her work there. Without this inscription I would not know that she was capable of writing poems. She was always deep and silent in this way.¹⁰³

Yao Mian knew that his wife liked reading poems through their communication in domestic life, but he did not realize that she was capable of writing poems until he saw her improvisation at Yue Cliff. He might have liked her handwriting; therefore, when he and his female family members arrived at the destination, he asked his wife to inscribe the date there as a proof of their trip, which was a common practice for male elite travelers at that time. Such writing was presumably a brief record of tourist information, neither suggesting the writer's individuality nor presenting his or her personal emotion. Yao Mian's wife agreed and, surprisingly, composed a poem instantly to express her joyous feeling for the natural scenery, and she inscribed her work there like many contemporary elite males did at famous scenic sites. In comparison to simple factual records of travelers and dates, poems or essays became literary mediums for later tourists to resonate with the authors' appreciation of the scenes.

Men and women had varied perceptions of and motivations for leaving inscriptions at the sites they visited. Male elite, as Robert Harist argues, "signified to a public readership their participation in activities that defined their class, or the class with which they wished to be associated . . . by leaving behind their names" at the scenic or historic sites.¹⁰⁴ They took advantage of their visits of popular public sites to claim their "free-spirited independence," ratify their elite identity, and achieve "mutual recognition."¹⁰⁵ None of these intentions applied to women, who were expected to consume a *jia*-centered culture prescribed

by the ideal gender structure. Nevertheless, deviation happened occasionally, as Zou's example shows. Impressed by the beautiful scenery, Zou composed a poem rather than merely inscribed the date as her husband requested. She appreciated her own work, and she carefully selected an inscription location to protect her writing from natural decay, a problem which might have caught her attention when she observed stone inscriptions elsewhere. She emulated the male contemporaries' fad of leaving inscriptions at scenic sites, but she practiced it at a place people did not frequent.

Unlike the male elites, Zou Miao Zhuang did not expect, and even attempted to avoid, a broad readership. "To participate in writing," as Grace Fong suggests, "women were expected to internalize the stern moral attitude society held toward their gender."¹⁰⁶ Zou Miao Zhuang's assimilation of "a horizon of expectation defined . . . by her gender" was recorded in Yao Mian's narrative. She and her older sister "were both good at poetry writing. However, they said that writing was not part of women's affairs, and thus did not like to compose."¹⁰⁷ Yao Mian was astonished at his wife's literary talent evidenced by the poem and interested in knowing more about her literary creation. However, she would not share her writings with him and decisively kept him outside her private literary world. It is obvious that she must have been used to keeping her literary works to herself, based on her view that "writing was not part of women's affairs." She did not wish to present her compositions to her husband even in the *jia*, let alone to the unfamiliar public of the outside space. After the trip to Yue Cliff, they traveled together again. On one occasion, they climbed to Xishan Hall 溪山堂, drank, and then departed. He seized the opportunity to urge his wife to leave a poem there, as she did at Yue Cliff. She said, "This is a place people frequently visit. How could a woman leave her name here?"¹⁰⁸ In her mind, authorship was an essential part of literary creation, and exposing a woman's name to a public of strangers was inappropriate. Therefore, although she had left a poem at the desolate Yue Cliff on her own initiative, she refused to do the same thing at Xishan Hall, which tourists frequented. Literate women from elite families like Zou Miao Zhuang did not intend to display their literary and calligraphy skills to unknown outsiders in a public space, although they may have possessed the same "education and cultural sophistication to appreciate such excursions"¹⁰⁹ as their male counterparts did. On the contrary, elite men like Yao Miao, who pursued companionate relationships, actually were curious about women's expression of literary skills and did not question

the propriety of their leaving names and literary creations in the outside sphere. Yao seemed upset at his wife's declination, and thus she explained to him the unsuitability of leaving her name in a public place. In this case, the wife cared about the appropriateness of her behaviors outside the *jia* more than the husband did.

Zou Miao Zhuang's biography suggests that she had a strong self-expectation of conformity with Confucian gender ideals. As an admirer of Zhu Xi, she must have known his *Family Rituals*. But acting against the prescriptive messages in the book, she felt comfortable about crossing the middle gate and traveling outside the *jia*. What impressed her the most was not the family regulations that prescribed women's appropriate behaviors but his travel writings, which aroused her aspiration for the beauty of nature. Acknowledging but disregarding Zhu Xi's authority in reinterpreting classical gender ideals,¹¹⁰ she presented her own understanding of the boundary between orthodoxy and deviation. Therefore, she accepted and rejected leaving her name at different places, although such a deed was theoretically illegitimate according to the strict Confucian prescriptive literature, regardless of location. Her husband's request for another poem implies his possibly more flexible interpretation of, or unintentional ignorance of, the gender boundary, in spite of his sincere intellectual commitment to the *daoxue* school. After he heard her explanation, he realized and confirmed his wife's gender consciousness and acclaimed, "Alas, from this case, I can see my wife's ambition."¹¹¹ Inscribing her name and poem provided the husband an opportunity to know her literary capability, while not leaving her handwriting exemplified her womanly virtue that he appreciated.

Yao Mian grieved over his wife's death and personally composed her epitaph to recall the miscellaneous details of her life course. During the Song period, women's epitaphs were seldom written by their spouses, as evidenced by the available Fujian women's epitaphs. A husband writing a wife's epitaph usually involved strong conjugal love emotions, which was not in accordance with Confucian gender ideals. In contrast to the virtuous domestic deeds vaguely addressed in this commemorative text, Yao Mian elaborated on his wife's enthusiasm for and rich experience of traveling along with him, without any attempts to justify such "unorthodox" behaviors.¹¹² This Confucian husband enjoyed, recorded, and praised his wife's company outside the *jia* as well as her literacy, which he weighed over the orthodox principles of gender segregation in their everyday life. Yao Mian's case may not be unique. Confucians in the Song respected the classical notions of gender hierarchy and

segregation on paper; however, their attitudes toward immediate female relatives in reality might have strayed from their puritanical ideological pursuit. These attitudes varied, depending more on such mundane considerations as their personalities, feelings, and pragmatic concerns. What counted as appropriate behaviors for women in real life was a question that confronted both elite men and women, who answered it with their own actions in diverse ways.

Apart from poems inscribed on inn walls, Song elite women's literary traces were rarely visible in the outside space. Inscriptions left at popular places of interest were exclusively the work of elite males and lasted much longer than the poems inscribed on inn walls did. Women could enjoy tours together with their male relatives, but they might feel unwilling to leave writings there, as concrete barriers blocking public gaze were unavailable. They were simply mentioned as anonymous auxiliary family members in the inscriptions left by some men. Furthermore, keeping in mind that literature and the outside space were men's orthodox domains, Song elite women themselves intentionally avoided leaving permanent traces at the public sites they visited.

Conclusion

Although Song women were supposed to stay inside the *jia* and act as custodians of domestic values, their sojourns in the male-dominant outside sphere were recorded in a wide array of primary sources, including official chronicles, local gazetteers, literary anthologies, and anecdotes. These traces provide valuable perspectives on how women lived up to Confucian ideals and constructed their space through movement and mobility in Song society.

Popular transportation vehicles such as sedan chairs and carriages provided Song sojourners with great convenience on the road. As Song women were excluded from the state's bureaucratic system, which regulated men's usage of such facilities, in the Northern Song they enjoyed more freedom in selecting vehicles than men governed by sumptuary laws. (This gender difference ceased to matter in the Southern Song when state regulation of men's use of sedan chairs disappeared.) Women's employment of these vehicles transformed them from unisex devices to gendered house-in-motion. Furthermore, their frequent use of such commercially produced vehicles reciprocally influenced their manufacture and caused the development of women-specific designs in Fujian. These objects constituted relatively segregated places for women in the open

outside space, created a movable inner/outer boundary for women, and thus, in the eyes of Confucian moralists for whom female seclusion was desirable, legitimized their temporary existence in the domain outside the *jia*.

Song women seldom left material traces during their journeys. The exceptional proofs of their appearance in the wider social sphere were poems written on inn room walls and at scenic spots. The former offered them places to express their emotions, while the latter made some of them feel at ease to display their literary talent because of the absence of the male gaze, although the records of such cases are extremely rare. Song women continuously redefined the boundary between inner and outer as their physical bodies moved about in the sphere outside the *jia*. The inner/outer boundary was negotiated through women's mobility and agency. It was characterized by fluidity and flexibility, and it provided Song women with an opaque yet accessible channel through which to commute between the *jia* and the space outside.



Women in Local Communities

The *jia* was both the most fundamental kinship organization and the normal place for women to spend their everyday life during the Song. Although often small and localized, the *jia* was not an isolated social entity. It developed through its members' continuous material and intellectual communication with other parallel or higher-level social units, but most frequently within the local society.¹ A local community was interpreted as a flexible social concept instead of a rigid administrative one.² The vagueness and fluidity of its geographic scale in the Song elite discourse support Anne Gerritsen's viewing "the local as a constructed space that was constantly defined and redefined within its local, regional, and national context."³ As earlier scholars have stated, Chinese society experienced a gradual process of localization along with the Northern Song–Southern Song transition.⁴ Numerous elite men overtly advocated the recognition of local communities as important social units. They put emphasis on them as the most important contexts for elite life and were engaged in their construction together with commoners residing in the same areas. Of course, there were large differences between different sites.⁵ Among the Song circuits, Fujian included some of the most economically and culturally developed regions.⁶ On the one hand, local communities in the developed parts of Fujian were mature and advanced. They provided women with a variety of arenas in which to go beyond the traditional *jia* territory and exercise their own agency to expand and modify the social space available to them. On the other

hand, elite men, including neo-Confucian adherents, steadily increased in number and influence in many of these local communities. In spite of the pursuit of the classical Confucian ideal of gender segregation, they realistically adjusted their gender expectations in everyday interactions with local women, especially their female relatives. While committing themselves to the construction of local communities, they witnessed, welcomed, and on many occasions praised women's contributions in the same domain. In the context of the broad field of local communities, Fujian women displayed their capabilities in managing both family businesses and their own enterprises, involving themselves actively in local welfare, and directing various public constructions as their male counterparts did.

Inner Affairs (*Nei Shi* 內事) and Outer Affairs (*Wai Shi* 外事)

In order to enforce the ideology of gender segregation, Song elite men wrote prescriptions to exclude women from the space outside of the *jia* and prevent them from participating in all outer affairs. One means to this end could be the elaboration of the Confucian canon. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the early Confucian classic *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記) declares that “men should not speak of what belongs to the inside, nor women of what belongs to the outside” and that “things spoken inside should not go out; words spoken outside should not come in.”⁷ In this ideal construction of things, women inside the *jia* should have no relevance to male family members' enterprise in the field outside the *jia*. The Song elite developed a view that “women have no outer affairs (*fu ren wu wai shi* 婦人無外事),” which continued to have intellectual and cultural power and was frequently reiterated in elite men's explications and reinterpretations of early Confucian classics. An important strand of Song elite ideas on society was devoted to the project of reestablishing an idealized Confucian social order. The repeated discussion of the “women have no outer affairs” idea in some Song elite men's writings was a generalizing but still fairly concrete representation of their theory of gender segregation. Authors of family regulations like Sima Guang, in addition to advocating strict gender segregation in physical terms down to the structure of a house, asserted straightforwardly that “men are in charge of all affairs on the outside; women manage inside affairs.”⁸ This statement distinctly demarcated men's and women's living space and their respective business and defined the division of labor between men and

women in functional terms. In conformity with such guidelines, Song women were destined to be confined in the inner quarters and thus had no reason to be active in their local communities. However, whatever the cultural power of the ideology of gender segregation, Song elite men did not treat the idea that “women have no outer affairs” as a rigid principle.⁹ The idea, even when not ignored completely, could be interpreted in different ways and applied from diverse perspectives, depending on context, so as to reconcile classicist dogmas with social reality. A general analysis of the flexible interpretation of this principle will help us understand the extent to which Song women were allowed to, or simply did, deal with certain matters in the spheres outside the inner *jia*.

The concepts of “inner affairs” (*nei shi*) and “outer affairs” (*wai shi*) frequently appeared in epitaphs written by Song elite men for women. In these contexts, the idea that women were engaged in inner affairs while men dealt with outer affairs was presented as the ideal division of labor for the *jia*. In these texts, certain words such as *men* 門 “gate,” *kun* 闥 “gate of the inner chambers,” or *nie* 闕 “gate” were usually prefixed to the “inner affairs” term to define the specific “inner” sphere. The use of nouns related to the gate structure suggests that “inner affairs” should be understood to refer to women’s action inside the domestic compound, conforming to the presumption that women’s space for living and acting was inside the *jia*. Women’s “inner affairs” were exemplified more precisely in some epitaphs: the examples invariably involve the handling of family members’ daily life inside the *jia*, including supporting parents-in-law, cooking meals, weaving, and reconciling family members’ relationships. Ideally speaking, men were obliged to fulfill their commitment to their *jia* together with female family members. We can see from their writings that some elite men complained about the difficulty of dealing with inner affairs when their wives were either absent or incompetent. The Northern Song scholar official Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019–1083), for instance, bemoaned the hardship of managing kitchen affairs after his wife passed away in an impromptu poem he composed while cooking soybean paste.¹⁰ Elite men expected women to deal with inner affairs and thus exempt men from inner troubles, which might distract them while working in their dominant outer sphere. Many elite men credited their wives with their achievements in outer affairs, which resulted in the prevalent acclamation of women as capable and devoted inner helpers in a large number of funerary inscriptions.¹¹

In exploring citations of the classical “women have no outer affairs” topos in Song women’s epitaphs, I have found that they usually appear

in four kinds of contexts.¹² First, the line was cited as a classical slogan to praise women's female virtue.¹³ Second, because many epitaph authors were not the dead woman's relatives and were thus unqualified to describe her inner affairs specifically, some of them quoted the classical idea, following which they stated that their writing sources directly originated from the information provided by the dead woman's male relatives, to support the trustworthiness of their compositions and justify the legitimacy of their writings.¹⁴ Third, the line might be cited when a particular woman was said to have ended her contact with the outside world and her handling of outer affairs.¹⁵ In such cases, it is clear that the woman in question was used to dealing with outer affairs in some sense. The term "outer affairs" might be read as broad enough to cover any and all contact with the outer sphere. However, because the generic constraints of a praise genre required that their authors bear the principle that "women have no outer affairs" in mind, such "outer affairs" as appear in Song women's epitaphs are usually those directly related to their "inner affairs," especially their communication with people in their neighborhood. Strikingly, some elite men also claimed that they would no longer pay attention to or have any contact with "outer affairs."¹⁶ These statements strongly resemble those attributed to women, but the interpretations of "outer affairs" in these texts are not the same as those in women's biographies because of the gender difference. Generally speaking, "outer affairs" were more likely to indicate state affairs in men's epitaphs. Fourth, some epitaphs show us the "women have no outer affairs" doctrine being taken advantage of by women as an orthodox excuse when they refused to interfere in outer affairs.¹⁷ In many cases, male outsiders attempted to take advantage of women's influence to change male relatives' decisions on state affairs. Intimate family relationships between men and women could function as practical, though theoretically illegitimate, human resources in managing men's public affairs. Of course, men's state affairs counted as outer affairs for women, and thus women could use the classical principle to refuse outsiders' manipulation of this exclusive communication channel hidden inside the *jia*.

Two pairs of social concepts, "inner affairs" vs. "outer affairs" and "private affairs" vs. "public affairs," overlapped with each other to some extent but were not identical. As Conrad Schirokauer and Robert Hymes interpret, "when arenas or sectors of society were the issue in Sung, the term 'public (*gong* 公),' if used, referred always to the government. . . . 'Private,' when used in like contexts, seems to have applied to the world of individual and household interests and to the

commercial world.”¹⁸ In comparison to the three-level complexity (individual, household, and government) of “private affairs/public affairs,” “inner affairs/outer affairs” seems to have been more narrowly defined, as it was subjected to certain gender structure. The idea that “the men are in charge of all affairs on the outside; the women manage the inside affairs” indicates that both men and women were endowed with various responsibilities for the sake of family, state, and society. Individuals were supposed to serve multiple groups regardless of their gender, and their personal and spiritual pursuits, which might well be included within the private pole of the “public affairs/private affairs” polarity, were excluded from the field of “inner affairs/outer affairs,” in which both poles referred to duties undertaken for collectivities. The boundary between “private” and “public” was ambiguous and tended to be flexible, depending on the specific context. In contrast, the division between “inner affairs” and “outer affairs” had a more concrete and constant reference and point of division—the *jia*. However, because of each *jia*’s varied situation, women’s diverse living situations, and elite men’s divergent attitudes toward women’s space, the domain of “inner affairs/outer affairs” in Song society could only be roughly outlined, which made negotiation as to the boundary between “inner affairs” and “outer affairs” possible. Although Confucian classics assumed that “women’s correct position is the inside,” the *jia*, an essential part of an extensive social network, provided Song women with a crucial and practical exit to extend from “inner” to “outer,” to reach beyond the inner *jia* and thus achieve the opportunity to participate in the outer affairs.

The distinction between “inner affairs” and “outer affairs” does not suggest that men and women occupied absolutely opposite places in the division of labor; it implies that men and women could permeate each other’s space. A consistent gender relationship appeared necessary to elite men’s pursuit of ideal social order, but to what extent it was practiced in social reality during the Song period is questionable. Although men and women each had a distinct space allotted ideologically, they could change places in real life. Abnormal situations in which “women managed outer affairs” and “men managed inner affairs” certainly occurred. In my understanding, the actual gender condition of labor division was more likely to be “men *zhu* 主 outer, women *zhu* 主 inner.” *Zhu* might be interpreted as “take charge of,” “manage,” or equally well as “mainly” and “mostly.” It provided a basic criterion to define their varied space corresponding to different gender identities, and at the same time, it allowed women to move in some outer areas.

Women and Household Economy

Among Song women's multiple responsibilities, "managing inner provisions" (*zhu zhong kui* 主中饋) was the principal one, as food was a family's material base. *Zhong kui* referred literally to home meals; however, in Song people's everyday life, the idea of "managing inner provisions" did not restrict women to kitchens. Besides everyday food service, women were in many cases supposed to manage the point of origin of "inner provisions"—the household property. According to Huang Kuanzhong's study, from Song on, civil service examination success and economic success became two of the major criteria by which to tell the rise or decline of a traditional *jia*.¹⁹ Theoretically speaking, the management of the household economy might be defined as an inner affair. However, classical morality assumed elite men's responsibility of "managing the household (*qi jia* 齊家)" preceded their political ambition of "ordering the state (*zhi guo* 治國)" and "setting at peace all under the Heaven (*ping tianxia* 平天下)." Thus, both male and female family members should participate in the operation of family businesses. In fact, as Joseph McDermott points out, "Chinese men and women, separately or together, have been engaged in handling, managing, and deciding family finances for a very long time."²⁰

Beverly Bossler compares women's epitaphs in the Tang and Song dynasties and points out the theme of women's involvement in financial affairs "becomes exceedingly common" in the Song, despite very few Tang examples addressing this issue.²¹ Moreover, in the Song era, we see the increasing prominence of positive portrayals of women's management of household economy in comparison to men's throughout the Northern Song–Southern Song transition, in spite of the assumption of men's and women's collaboration.²² In epitaphs for men during the Northern Song, we find many detailed accounts of how elite men preserved and improved their families' financial base. However, in Southern Song epitaphs, we find such acts more and more attributed to women. My study of Fujian women's engagement in financial affairs vastly relies on their funerary inscriptions from the Southern Song period by taking two facts into account. One is that there are more extant Fujian elite women's biographies from the Southern Song than those from the Northern Song period. The other is that women's property management activities are more straightforwardly and frequently recorded in the Southern Song epitaphs than in the Northern Song ones.

To fulfill their inner-*jia* responsibilities as managers of the household economy, many Fujian women contacted the outside world of their local community. For example, Zhao Shanshen's 趙善琛 mother, Ms. Mao 毛氏, "worked in the field and participated in her house construction by herself to preserve the household livelihood."²³ Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 even informed people in detail that his cousin "wore a shabby quilt jacket and went to supervise the land on a cold day."²⁴ The descriptions of her worn clothes, a remote muddy farmland, as well as the unpleasant weather stage her in quite an undesirable circumstance, in contrast to the well-protected and cloistered inner chamber where an elite woman was expected to stay. Such exceptional depictions of women's miserable but determined images in face of hardships while dealing with economic affairs in the sphere outside the *jia* did not arouse anxiety among the elite males caring about gender segregation.²⁵ They supported male authors' claims and convinced the readers of these elite women's high morality. The Song elite men, out of their realistic consideration for the household's economic needs, recognized the contributions of women who worked outside the *jia* for the sake of their families' interests, at the expense of the observance of the ideal of gender separation.

In comparison to the elite women in the above examples, women from lesser families might have felt more imperative to go out of the *jia* and pursue economic resources to satisfy their families' demands. Local elite men noticed, appreciated, and recorded the hard work and diligence of Fujian women outside the *jia*. For example, in the *San-shan zhi*, Liang Kejia 梁克家 (1128–1187) briefly summarizes the local customs of Fuzhou and points out women exceed men while working in the field and market.²⁶ Without any criticism, Liang viewed Fuzhou women exposing physical and mental capability to the public as a significant local culture. In the seventeenth century, another Fujian native, He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠, referred to Liang's work while composing the *Min shu* 閩書—a comprehensive gazetteer of the entire Fujian district. It presents great geographic divergence in terms of men's and women's division of labor.²⁷ The "men till and women weave" pattern was prevalent in some regions. However, in Fuzhou, as had happened 500 years earlier, "Husband and wife collaborate in farming. Women work more than men."²⁸ In addition, women in Quanzhou were also said to work together with men in many domains, including trade. He Qiaoyuan recalls the negative comment on Fujian women's conspicuous engagement in business in the *History of Sui* 隋書 of the seventh century.

As a caring and companionate Fujianese, he argues, “[the authors of the *History of Sui*] did not know commoners who resided in the desolate land could not make a living if not doing so.”²⁹ From the *History of Sui* to *Sanshan zhi* and *Min shu*, the sources ranging over a millennium bring to light a long tradition of women’s deep and active involvement in agriculture and commerce in Fujian. The value of commoner women’s labor was publicly visible and widely recognized, although the shortage of relevant records makes further research a real challenge.

Some Fujian women were fortunate enough to live in wealthy families and were unlikely to work in the fields or on building sites. Yet although they did not need to work outside the *jia*, some still took up the task of managing household economy. Shan Kui’s 單夔 widowed mother, Ms. Ye 葉氏, “had two-hundred *mu* 畝 lands. She carefully calculated the income and expenses, and haggled over every penny”³⁰ to raise the children. Some women even contacted outer tenants directly. For instance, Lin Dong’s 林棟 wife, Ms. Sun 孫氏, was in charge of the household’s farmlands. One day, “she noticed after a tenant left that the tenant had paid more than the prescribed rent. Thereupon she pursued him for several *li* 里 and returned the extra money to him.”³¹ Ms. Ye and Ms. Sun, although residing inside the *jia*, spread their networks outward. Their capabilities of managing the relationships with outsiders influenced the living conditions of their family members, male and female. In all the cases above, these Fujian women unexceptionally took care of the farmlands, which, although far away from their inner chambers, proved to be the most important economic resources of the household.

Other than earning financial resources for the *jia*, many women were also in charge of the distribution and consumption of household wealth. Here, too, the primary texts recording Song women’s economic activities are mostly epitaphs, and Song women with epitaphs usually originated from elite families. In comparison to their peasant contemporaries, whose main concern might be the primary need for life necessities, the elite women we see in epitaphs engaged in higher-level consumptive activities such as expanding farmland and house property. For example, Guo Tang’s 郭墜 (1245–1306) mother, Ms. Lin 林氏 (1217–1293) in Putian, “reduced expenditures for accommodating guests and for family sacrifices in accordance with changes in (her family members’) official salaries. She spent all the family savings on purchasing farmland.”³² The epitaph writer Huang Zhongyuan 黃仲元 (1230–1312) legitimized Ms. Lin’s economic activities by connecting them to the family’s needs for social networking and ancestor worship. However, Ms. Lin went further than merely maintaining the balance between the income and cost

by investing the family capital on the lucrative business of purchasing farmland. The investment in real estate, very likely as part of their wise strategic plans for household finance, could guarantee the development of household economy and preserve the *jia*'s stable status in a mobile social hierarchy. Moreover, it may have helped them survive the tumultuous dynastic transition from the Song to Yuan.³³ Zheng Decheng's 鄭德稱 wife, Ms. Huang 黃氏 in Jin'an 晉安, was also responsible for family management and spent her limited economic resources on a house after the husband died. She "thought that living in the country made it inconvenient for her sons to look for a teacher. She sold her dowry and bought a big house beside the county school."³⁴ According to the epitaph writer, her insightfulness and efforts paid off afterward.

Patricia Ebrey's study of women, money, and class shows a few Song elite men viewed women as victims of the intrusions of the market in the *jia*.³⁵ In contrast, as the above cases have exemplified, in a large number of epitaphs that Song literati composed for women, the female protagonists achieved the basic knowledge of math and market transactions; had educational resources from unidentified origins; and functioned as active participants, contributors, and beneficiaries of the increasing trend of commercialization. Both men and women were vulnerable to the instability and insecurity of the market economy. Some moralists, like Sima Guang, attempted to save the families from the destructive impact of the market and keep women away from money, as Patricia Ebrey has articulated.³⁶ Nevertheless, such a negative view of women and the market never prevailed throughout the Song. A substantial number of elite men were comfortable about recording and praising the wisdom and even independence that upper-class wives displayed in maintaining and increasing household property in fluctuating economic circumstances. Practically speaking, for the sake of the sustainability of a family, a husband valued a responsible wife who was able to manage household economy side by side with him or as his deputy more than a virtuous wife who concealed herself behind the middle gate all the time and stayed away from the outside world. In the eyes of elite men, deceased women's male relatives who provided the details of women's economic activities, and epitaph authors who incorporated such information into the biographies alike, an upper-class woman's domestic value largely rested upon her financial ability that she cultivated in her communication with other people in the market.

In many cases, wives became default and reliable backups in the management of household property when men were busy with "outer affairs," which were not limited to scholarly or official pursuits. For

example, Weng Fuqing's 翁福清 wife, Ms. Liu 劉氏, was a talented household manager in a merchant family in Fuqing 福清. The family was said to be harmonious under her supervision. When Fuqing was dying, he said to Liu, "My brothers and I are so lucky that our descendants are becoming prosperous. You should control them and prevent them from conceiving the idea of breaking up the family." After Fuqing died, Liu became still more sincere, loyal, and trustworthy. Family members gave all their earnings from the bamboo trade to Liu and "did not dare to save privately (*bugan sixu* 不敢私蓄)." There were eighty people in the family, and four generations all lived together.³⁷ Unlike the scholars' or officials' households examined earlier, the Weng family made a living by trading in bamboo. However, like many of the women in elite families, Ms. Liu took charge of the household economy in her husband's merchant family. From the narrative, we can infer that Ms. Liu had already proved her capability and established her authority in managing the big household while her husband was alive. Otherwise, in the big patrilineal family that consisted of both her own children and other adults surnamed Weng, it would be hard to imagine that all family members would continue to accept her dominance after Weng Fuqing's death. Her work was appreciated by her husband, and evidently her competence was recognized by her husband's family members. Women's management of household economy was accepted in Song society, and their outstanding performances were praised by male kin, whether elite or commoners. In Ms. Liu's *jia*, she represented the *gong* 公 for her management of the common wealth of her husband's household. A woman was not essentially identified as "private," which suggested a certain inferiority in moral achievement. Her financial capability might gain her the reputation of "public" and elevate her position in the elite discourse of moral hierarchy.

Women's intensive work in family economy was appreciated by elite men, kin, and biographers alike. In a few epitaphs we see that authors attributed the rise of a *jia* to specific female figures who possessed excellent household management skills.³⁸ Patricia Ebrey attributed such favorable views of female family members' managerial tasks to the rise of neo-Confucianism. "Sima Guang and other Sung classicists tried to reconcile the diverse demands of acting as guardians of their *chia* while avoiding the pursuit of gain." However, the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, in her words, "resolved the tension by abandoning the notion of responsibility for the *chia* as an economic unit."³⁹ According to Patricia Ebrey, neo-Confucian teachers and thinkers from the Northern to the Southern

Song encouraged elite men to engage in outer affairs such as studying, preparing for examinations, service to the community or the nation, and administration. The same teachers promoted the idea that women should take on the role of economic manager in the household, and exemplary women's success in household management was celebrated in their epitaphs.⁴⁰ However, Bettine Birge notices the unusualness of women's role as household bursar in the writings of progenitors of the Learning of the Way in the Northern Song, and she attributes the prevalence of the thought to Zhu Xi's advocacy.⁴¹ The lack of the Cheng brothers' writings on women makes it unclear whether this difference in the records of men's and women's roles in the management of household economy was a new trend initiated by them, as Ebrey has suggested. However, the descriptions of wives substituting for husbands in charge of household finances in the Song Fujian are intensively, although not exclusively, available in epitaphs written by the Cheng learning adherents, *daoxue* scholars, or literati who had close connections to the neo-Confucian advocates both before and after Zhu Xi's rise.⁴² It does not necessarily suggest a change of roles in household management in social reality, but it indicates the prevalence of such a desirable mode of domestic division of labor, at least among the neo-Confucian scholars in Fujian throughout the Song.

Yang Shi 楊時 (1053–1135), who was credited with introducing the Cheng brothers' thoughts to Fujian, for example, wrote a funerary inscription for Zhang Duanshu 章端叔 (1045–1106). He described Zhang as a noble gentleman never engaged in family business, while "there were about one-hundred persons in his *jia*, and everybody had a house to live in and land to provide them food. These were his wife's contributions."⁴³ Zhang's wife shouldered the burden of managing the household property while he was devoted to government affairs and scholarship. And Zhu Xi, as Patricia Ebrey has noticed, praised many elite women for "freeing men for higher pursuits." These were wives who "through frugal management and great attention to form would handle all material and managerial matters."⁴⁴ By writing and circulating such epitaphs, these neo-Confucian writers encouraged elite men to relegate the task of household finances to wives and advocated women's engagement in economic affairs.

In order to legitimize women's unavoidable communication with outsiders in managing the household, epitaph writers usually interpreted it as "family affairs (*jia shi* 家事)." It was an ambiguous concept with no reference to the physical boundary between inner and outer. Male

authors used this term to contextualize women in a broader space and justify their activities by defining them as lying within the inner sphere of the *jia*. However, there did not exist a consistent view of women's involvement in family affairs throughout the Song. The *Yuanshi shifan* 袁氏世範 of Yuan Cai 袁采 (twelfth century), the pragmatic family manual written in the Southern Song period, directly treated women's family affairs within the sphere of outer affairs. It asserted women's incapability in such matters, and at the same time it confirmed that women's work in this field was important in maintaining a family business and harmonizing family members.

The saying that "women do not take part in outer affairs" is based on the fact that worthy husbands and sons take care of everything for them, whereas unworthy ones can always find ways to hide their deeds, whatever they are, from the women.

Many men today indulge in pleasure and gambling; some end up selling their lands, even their houses, without their wives' knowledge. Therefore, when husbands are scoundrels, even if wives try to handle business matters it is of no use. . . . When sons are scoundrels, it is useless for mothers to try to handle outer affairs.

For women, these are grave misfortunes, but what can they do about them? But wouldn't it be good if husbands and sons would only remember that their wives and mothers are helpless and suddenly repent!⁴⁵

The *Yuanshi shifan* was divided into three sections—"Getting Along with Relatives," "Improving Personal Conduct," and "Managing Family Affairs"—and the passage above appears in the first part. In this family manual, women's participation in the family business was read within the context of human relationships inside the *jia*. From the author's point of view, managing household property was one kind of outer affair. Male family members were obliged to take care of it, while women were supposed to supervise and cooperate. Women would feel it unnecessary to deal with such an outer affair so long as their spouses and sons were qualified and trustworthy. However, if the husbands and sons were heedless or untrustworthy, women would find it useless to handle outer affairs because the males' harmful conduct was beyond their control. The author thought that women were in a pitiable situation and hoped that their husbands and sons could understand this and

thus devote themselves to the proper and honest management of family business. The author viewed handling household property as the male family members' major responsibility, while recognizing women's practical function in such matters to some extent. He explained the popular saying that "women do not take part in outer affairs (*furen bubi yu waishi* 婦人不必預外事)" through his assumptions about their male relatives' highly varying capacities, and furthermore he elevated this argument to the title of his chapter, "Women Do Not Need to Take Part in Outer Affairs." The fact that he felt constrained to argue against the usefulness or practicality of women's managing household affairs is evidence that there were, in fact, women doing this. Yuan Cai was living in an age when neo-Confucian moralists (of which he was not one) were proposing that women should be in charge of household affairs, including the household economy. And he was implicitly responding to that proposal by arguing that this was impractical for all the reasons he stated. Had the proposal enjoyed no real strength in his own time, there would be no need for him to argue against it.

In spite of oppositions from some contemporaries like Yuan Cai, neo-Confucian authors' enthusiasm for women's managerial capability did not decline. In some accounts, they even pointed out that women's managerial talent earned them personal reputations in the local community. Han Yuanji 韓元吉 (1118–1187), a close friend of Zhu Xi, described Ms. Shangguan 上官 as a competent woman in managing household property. She used her dowry to redeem the grave mountain of her husband's ancestors, which not only benefited all the people in her husband's lineage but convinced her community of her foresight. Woodmen living in the area did not dare to approach the forest and said, "This is Ms. Shangguan's offering (*ci* 賜)." ⁴⁶ A private transaction conducted by a woman with her own property for her husband's family could become a well-known legend in the local community and would be commemorated even hundreds of years after her death. ⁴⁷ Huang Gan 黃幹 (1152–1221), Zhu Xi's son-in-law and faithful follower, recorded that Lin Song's 林松 wife became the only person on whom the whole household relied after Lin died. She preserved the current farmland and house and prevented household property from being lost. And people in the same community trusted her for the traits of gentleness, benevolence, righteousness, and trustworthiness. ⁴⁸ Liu Kezhuang (1187–1269), a later neo-Confucian who enshrined and worshipped Zhu Xi and Huang Gan, wrote an epitaph for Xiong Dajing's 熊大經 mother, Ms. Zhou, who took charge of all household affairs when she was in middle age. When she became old, her

jia relocated and became wealthier; the household property accumulated and she could be more relied upon in family business. “Her neighbors and people in the local community admired her wisdom.”⁴⁹ These Song Fujian women must have had frequent contact with people outside of their *jia* while handling family business. Their competence in such matters was visible to outsiders, especially local residents who participated in trade with them, which resulted in the circulation of their reputation in the whole local community. Neo-Confucian adherents, in spite of their respect for the classical ideals of gender-based space segregation and labor division, acknowledged and articulated women’s involvement in family business. They liked to see the local community’s appreciation of wives’ managerial talent because it might help increase the reputation of the husbands’ *jias*.

The property that Song women managed belonged to the *jia*, but their active work in the outside world gave rise to their reputation beyond it. Among Song women’s contributions to their *jia*, elite men valued their creative and productive economic activities outside the *jia* over the frugality they performed in everyday consumption inside the *jia*. They kept the responsibility for “managing inner provisions” (*zhu zhong kui*) in mind, engaged with household property, and extended their pursuit of economic resources to the outer world in the interest of their *jia*. Therefore, it seems equally reasonable to identify their work as “inner affairs” or “outer affairs.” Women moved between inner and outer while handling family business. It not only required elite men to reinterpret the rule “women have no outer affairs,” but it presented encouraging live examples to women who lived nearby.

Women and Local Welfare

Women’s economic competence was appreciated by, but at the same posed a threat to, elite males who cared about gender difference and social hierarchy. As Robert Hymes has pointed out, wealth was a resource “women might convert” “into certain kinds of autonomy.”⁵⁰ A practical strategy that neo-Confucians adopted to deal with such a dilemma, according to Robert Hymes, was to confirm that autonomy but to orient it firmly toward the whole household.⁵¹ In their writings, an ideal wife “should plan finances, invest funds, collect rents, buy lands—but all from a position safely *within* the household—and presumably, in his ideal picture, having already divested herself of all private assets by donating her dowry to the family she would now manage.”⁵² But this was just one side

of the story. Besides the activities that women conducted inside the *jia* to maintain and increase household wealth, respectful “female household bursars” in men’s writings, including those composed by neo-Confucians, also disseminated dowry and household property outside the *jia*, which made their position not necessarily “within the household.” Situated in a broader context beyond the *jia*, women wielded economic autonomy either as representatives of their *jia* or on behalf of themselves. On many occasions, such efforts were consistent with the expectations of men in elite discourse and were applauded by elite males, acquaintances and strangers alike.

The study of the Tang-Song transition has revealed that Song society was characterized by much more extensive and constant social mobility after the collapse of the aristocratic mechanisms of the Tang dynasty. Under the pressure of social fluidity, elite men were obliged to adjust their strategies for the development of the *jia*, which included the modification and reinterpretation of women’s gendered role as “inner helpers” (*nei zhu* 内助). As Patricia Ebrey has stated, “The virtues of Song wives were complexly related to the traits that led to the survival and success of families in the upper class of their day. The ideal upper-class wife in Song times was not simply devoted to her husband’s family; she had the managerial abilities, literary talents, and interpersonal skills to see that it thrived.”⁵³ The role of “inner helpers” did not confine women to the inner quarters. Living in a complicated network of human relationships, they were expected not only to be filial to their parents-in-law and harmonize family members inside their *jia* but also to support relatives in their husbands’ lineages, to make friends with their neighbors, and to help people in their local communities. Like their managerial talents, their contribution to local welfare was sometimes as crucial as their male relatives’ in assisting their *jia* to establish a local reputation and maintain social status.

Peter Bol dates the spread of lineages to the Song period.⁵⁴ During the Northern Song period, male Confucian scholars such as Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 promoted the idea of “respecting ancestors and unifying lineages” (*jing zong shou zu* 敬宗收族).⁵⁵ In the Southern Song times, the leading advocate of neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi 朱熹, highlighted the concept of “lineage (*zu* 族),” and urged family members to expand their dedication to their nuclear families to the broader kinship organizations of lineage.⁵⁶ People’s commitment to their narrowly defined *jia* was to be enlarged to a responsibility for the whole *zu*. As half of a *jia*’s members, Song women were often assumed to share in such duties.

Like their male counterparts, women's assistance to lineage was represented in various ways.⁵⁷ Ms. Lu 盧氏, in her old age, lived with her son Cai Xiang 蔡襄 in Hangzhou, where he took a post. After she died, her coffin was escorted back to her hometown in Xianyou County 仙游. "Relatives cried. Many of them appeared to be too distressed. When they were asked [why they were so sad], they said, 'Mistress did me a favor.' And all had their own stories."⁵⁸ It is unstated for how long Ms. Lu had been away from her hometown, but her kin clearly remembered how they had benefited from her, although their individual narratives were not recorded.⁵⁹ In spite of the lack of details of Ms. Lu's help, women's support for relatives was usually described as direct financial aid, as is evident in abundant local gazetteers of Fujian. For example, Ni Ju's 倪據 wife Lin Xiaoqian 林小倩 took up the responsibility of supporting the Ni family after Ni Ju died. During her thirty-year widowhood, she managed the rituals for the Ni family members' marriages, increased the real estate of the household, and funded many poor lineage members.⁶⁰ Ren Daozong's 任道宗 wife "aided relatives who were in urgent need without reservation, and even forgot the poverty of her own family."⁶¹ Chen Junqing's 陳俊卿 mother, Ms. Zhuo 卓氏, "was benevolent in nature, and exhausted all her savings to help impoverished relatives."⁶² Where and how these women got the money is not explicitly stated in the epitaphs. In the cases of Ni Ju's and Ren Daozong's households, the widowed wives must have been in charge of the husbands' household property and used it to help the husbands' relatives. While in Ms. Zhuo's case, considering the tremendous wealth of her natal family and the poverty of her husband's household, she very likely employed her dowry money to support her husband's relatives.⁶³ No matter the origins of their money, all these women were praised for their generosity in sponsoring relatives in need of financial resources.

Among the lineages in Fujian there existed a special kinship organization: the imperial clan. Several hundred imperial relatives congregated in Fuzhou and Quanzhou in the Southern Song, while many others settled in various localities in Fujian. The geographic distance determined that the connection between them and the imperial court in Hangzhou was no longer as tight as it used to be in the Northern Song when most imperial members lived in Kaifeng. As John Chaffee's study shows, "the clan families that lived independently in southern China were by and large integrated into local society"⁶⁴ and became "more like the local elites with whom they were interacting."⁶⁵ Although they continued to receive subsidies and privileges from the emperor, the advancement

of their lineages relied more upon the efforts of individual members, including women. For instance, Ms. Wang (1150–1228) married a clan member, Zhao Yanlai 趙彥駉. Zhao's lineage was in Putian, although he took an official position at Quanzhou, the biggest clan center other than the one in the Southern Song capital. Ms. Wang proved to be a capable household manager in both her natal and husband's families. Like respectable elite wives in numerous epitaphs, she dealt with the funerals of her parents-in-law and husband appropriately and achieved a good reputation in the imperial lineage. She found teachers for sons, arranged the marriages of brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and treated lineage relatives with great generosity.⁶⁶ Chen Mi 陳宓 (1170–1230), the author of the epitaph, was one of Zhu Xi's disciples. He does not reveal the Zhao family's imperial clan identity in the text but presents it as an average elite lineage. Ms. Wang, as an imperial wife, contributed to the development of the imperial clan by assuming the typical responsibilities expected of elite spouses. The relatives and epitaph writer applauded the way she served the husband's family and lineage. In the eyes of the neo-Confucian author, an imperial wife's value lay in her commitment to the husband's *jia* rather than the prestigious status she achieved automatically through marriage or by birth.⁶⁷

Other than monetary and material aids, women also spent economic resources on supporting lineage relatives' cultural needs. In Xianyou County 仙游, Ye Chuan's 葉傳 wife, Ms. Huang 黃氏, invested all the household property in a charity school and invited several famous teachers to tutor children in the lineage.⁶⁸ The establishment of charitable schools had become a prevalent practice among the Song elite since the mid-Northern Song period.⁶⁹ Elite males assumed charity schools would strengthen the ties of lineages and maintain their unity and social status. They donated money to purchase facilities, recruited teachers, and designed education rules. Linda Walton suggests a charitable consciousness rooted in Confucian morality inspired local elites' enthusiasm for charitable estates.⁷⁰ Although Ms. Huang's incentives were not stated, she seemed to have noticed, admired, and thus emulated the male contemporaries' endeavors in running charitable schools. In the above local accounts, no matter how women varied in helping their lineage relatives, it was their management of household property and direct access to family financial resources that made their benevolent projects feasible.

In addition to assisting relatives, women were also active in helping familiar people in the neighborhood. Zhu Xi recorded the important role that Ms. Ding played in maintaining the lasting good relationship

between the Liu 劉 family and the Hu 胡 family, who lived in the same residence zone (*li* 里). Ms. Ding 丁氏 was Liu Yuanmo's 劉元默 wife, and she treated the Hu family especially well. One child in the Hu family was interested in studying and wanted to become a scholar but was opposed by his father. His mother told Ms. Ding this story. Ms. Ding encouraged the young man, offered him financial aid, and asked him to apply for the Imperial Academy together with her own son to help him realize his ambition.⁷¹ Due to the intimate relationship between the Liu family and the Hu family, Ms. Ding knew the mother of the young man in the Hu family and established a personal friendship. It is hard to tell why that mother informed Ms. Ding of her son's difficult situation. Her conversation with Ms. Ding might either have been a simple expression of her worry about the conflict between her husband and son or an implicit appeal for help from Ms. Ding. No matter her original intention, both she and Ms. Ding did not feel it inappropriate for women either to discuss or to enable a young man's academic pursuit. Furthermore, they were not worried about the Hu father's possible response to their decision. Very likely they assumed he would not oppose his son's academic pursuit provided financial aid was available.

There was neither blood nor marital connection between Ms. Ding and the young man of the Hu family. Ideally speaking, a woman's interference in the career plan of a non-relative young man and her involvement in the father-son conflict outside her *jia* did not count as a "family affair." The attitudes of the Liu family members, who provided Ms. Ding's life details, are not mentioned in the narrative. They, as well as the epitaph writer, obviously did not view Ms. Ding's behavior as a violation of gender boundary, otherwise it would not have been recorded in her biography. In addition to the Liu family and Zhu Xi, the Hu family also expressed their appreciation, according to Zhu Xi's claim that "even today, the seniors in the Hu family still talk about her humanity."⁷² Ms. Ding's case shows that women moved beyond the realm of family affairs in their everyday life. They were active in networking and developed relationships in the local society without the mediation of male relatives. They could gain the reputation of benevolence for benefiting outsiders and be applauded by elite males, including neo-Confucian moralists who advocated strict gender segregation in prescriptive literature.

As Richard von Glahn states, "in keeping with the basic tenets of Confucian social theory, Chu Hsi strongly endorsed vertical solidarity within the family, clan, and village and underscored the reciprocal commitments to communal welfare incumbent upon members of these

communities.”⁷³ A number of accounts left by neo-Confucian scholars from Fujian demonstrate women’s willingness to help people in the neighborhood although they, as half of the “members of these communities,” were not admonished to fulfill “a moral obligation to provide subsistence insurance to their less fortunate brethren.”⁷⁴ According to Zhu Xi, Rao Wei’s 饒偉 wife, Ms. Lü 呂氏, “did female neighbors and women living in the same *li* many kindnesses.”⁷⁵ Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159–1223) recalled that his sister, Ms. Cai 蔡氏 “was benevolent in nature, and never hesitated to help lonely people in the same *li*.”⁷⁶ Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269) used the example of Ms. Gu 顧氏, Lin Baijia’s 林百嘉 lay Buddhist mother, to show women not only displayed their own munificence but encouraged other people’s participation in local welfare. She “ever said that one must help others once or twice every day. She used this idea to encourage herself and other people. Every time when she saw someone do something good or bad in her *li*, she would say ‘if there are spiritual principles, won’t they be punished or rewarded?’”⁷⁷ Ms. Gu herself was a humanitarian. She exercised philanthropic beliefs in everyday life and endeavored to disseminate these beliefs to the neighbors.

In the above examples, all the beneficiaries were people residing in the same *li* with the protagonists. Each *li* 里 consisted of multiple *jias* separated by walls and gates, and each *xiang* (鄉 village) was made up of a number of *li* zones.⁷⁸ Unlike the unit of county (*xian* 縣), which was officially staffed with bureaucrats and regulated by the central government, *xiang* and *li* were virtual administrative organizations.⁷⁹ In Song texts, spatial words such as *li*, *xiang*, and *yi* (邑 village) appear as vague terms for “neighborhood” or “community,” with no necessary correspondence to any administrative unit or indeed to any bounded natural social unit.⁸⁰ A county, in spite of its control of broad regions, intensively displayed its authority where the county offices were located. However, most county residents lived far away from its administrative center. When women left the *jia*, the *li*, rather than the county, appeared to be the place that they were more familiar with. It provided more resources that women could access and exploit for networking. And the establishment of interpersonal and inter-*jia* connections in the *li* gave women opportunities to display their humanity.

Elite men who cared about the construction of a harmonious local community acknowledged and acclaimed women’s contact with and assistance to neighbors in the same *li*. For example, “people in the same *li* acclaimed her reasonable sense,”⁸¹ “her exemplary conducts were

well-known in the *li*,”⁸² and “this mother was respected by people in the same *li*.”⁸³ Women receiving commendations from people in the same *li* became a topos that elite men frequently used in memorial eulogies. The authors of the above three examples are respectively Chen Yuan 陳淵 (?–1145), who was Yang Shi’s son-in-law; Liao Gang 廖剛 (1071–1143), who was one of Yang Shi’s disciples; and Lin Yizhi 林亦之 (1136–1185), who was an influential lecturer on neo-Confucianism in Fujian. The development of neo-Confucianism in the Song at the local level was characterized by its adherents’ advocacy of and involvement in local welfare. As Robert Hymes argues, neo-Confucianism “offered the gentleman a set of channels for virtuous social action that could be pursued in a purely local sphere.”⁸⁴ These neo-Confucian devotees projected their own commitment to the local *li* community onto their expectations for female contemporaries. The vocabulary and terms that they manipulated to communicate with other elite male readers for mutual recognition and the formation of a common elite culture appeared in the literature of constructing an ideal woman. In conformity with their praise of men’s contributions to the local society, neo-Confucians extolled women’s good reputations in the neighborhood, a domain outside the *jia*, to exemplify their virtue. In contrast to men, women were excluded from the bureaucratic system and had no right to pursue an important means of personal fulfillment—the civil service examination. However, as Robert Hymes has pointed out, “for many in the elite, Southern Song ideal images of the gentleman were informed by a new stress on locality. Virtue could be displayed, obligations to society fulfilled, as laudably in local action as in office.”⁸⁵ These notions spread widely and provided elite men with alternative ways to realize their social value other than succeeding in official careers. Although they came into being without any hints of gender concerns, elite men’s reiteration and practice of these ideas unexpectedly presented women around them with a desirable means of self-realization. These notions, which initially targeted elite men, together with neo-Confucian scholars’ encouragement of women’s management of household property, coincidentally instigated women’s aspiration and practically prepared them for their participation in local welfare. Moreover, the presentation of women’s benevolent images in local affairs in epitaphs in return inspired elite male readers’ deeper commitment to local welfare.

In many cases, women did not render help to specific figures they knew; instead, they helped a group of people who encountered common hardship in the local community. Among all the sufferings, famine

was the most frequent and severe for local people. It was local officials' administrative responsibility during natural calamities such as famine to release contingency reserves to relieve the victims and stabilize food prices on the local market. Generally speaking, governmental aid was limited and could not satisfy all the people in urgent need, so local officials usually asked wealthy households for nongovernmental financial assistance in addition to encouraging their voluntary support. Governments' endeavors on famine relief might encounter resistance from local wealthy households, as natural calamities provided them with opportunities to drive up the price and gain unusual profits. According to Robert Hymes's study of the famine relief in Fuzhou 撫州, the moral and "ethical basis proposed by activist local officials, when they urged local elites to" sell stored rice at lowered prices to aid famine relief, was not "generally shared by local elites themselves."⁸⁶ Therefore, specific individuals' support for local relief could be valuable, as they not only benefited poor people but also set an example that their peers in local society might follow. For example, in the middle Northern Song, there was a severe famine in Wu Kequan's 吳可權 hometown, Zhangpu 漳浦 County. Rich people closed their storehouses, which drove up the grain price. Wu's mother, Ms. Wang 王氏, was the only one who "exhausted her household stores and made porridge to feed refugees and beggars. Many people thus survived. The beneficiaries were moved to tears when they talked about it even dozens of years later."⁸⁷ Wei Jing's 衛涇 (1159–1226) mother-in-law, Ms. Zhang 章氏, originated from Fujian. When she lived in Huating 華亭, she dispensed stored grain to people in the same *li* in a famine year, which lowered food prices on the local market. She encouraged wealthy households to follow her and thus saved numerous poor people in her community.⁸⁸ The influences of state, local government, and local community on women are all revealed in these examples. Although women were not required to support state relief strategies, their participation in local welfare was welcomed.

In the two cases, neither the male relatives nor their *jias* in general were addressed or credited to explain these women's achievement in the public domain. Local people, together with epitaph authors, put aside the belief that "women have no outer affairs" and attributed the benevolent activities to female individuals who played key roles in leading local reliefs. The author of Ms. Zhang's epitaph is Wei Jing, a high official. He befriended Zhu Xi and advertised his teaching. However, Zheng Xia 鄭俠 (1041–1119), the author of Ms. Wang's epitaph, lived in the Northern Song period and had no obvious connection to the neo-Confucian circle,

although he vehemently opposed Wang Anshi's 王安石 New Policies at the local level.⁸⁹ The similarity between Ms. Wang's and Ms. Zhang's stories suggest women's participation in local welfare was appreciated by neo-Confucian scholars who perceived local commitment to be part of their righteous duties and by officials who expected local forces' voluntary efforts in maintaining regional social order.

A large quantity of original sources evidence women's contributions to local welfare during famine seasons. Some of them even won praise from the government. Zhang Che's 張澈 wife, Ms. Lü 呂氏, was one such example. She doled out porridge to hungry people, burned proofs of debt, and renounced her claim to hundreds of debts in a famine year.⁹⁰ The story caught elite men's attention. It was recorded by Ke Shu 柯述 in his essay "Biography of a Worthy Mother (*Xian mu zhuan* 賢母傳)" and reported by a local administrator, Hu Shiwen 胡師文, to the central government.⁹¹ In Ms. Lü's case, a woman's spending household economic resources on local welfare was appreciated by local people, propagated by elite men, and approved by the state. Epitaphs were posthumous commemorative texts that male writers composed to recall deceased women's good deeds at the request of their relatives. Male authors projected their views of women into the writings, in hopes of male elite readers' resonance. In contrast, the government's praise and award of living female paragons directly confirmed the value of women in public domains. It established visible dynamic role models for both male and female audiences residing in the same local community to observe and learn from.

Women's material assistance went to people in all kinds of need in the local community. For example, Ms. Qiu's beneficiaries were not victims of natural calamities.

Chen Yan's 陳晏 wife, Ms. Qiu 丘氏 always regarded money lightly but thought highly of righteousness. She often doled out food to prisoners. . . . During the Jianyan 建炎 period, Ye Nong 葉農 invaded the county, but warned his followers not to disturb the filial daughter-in-law, Ms. Qiu, burn her household property, or kill her relatives. Some refugees in Gutian 古田 and Shanyang 杉洋 heard about this. They went and sought refuge with her, and thus all survived. Thanks to Ms. Qiu, the western part of the county avoided war.⁹²

Although the text is from a Ming local gazetteer, the original narrator must have been a Confucian scholar in the Song. He highlighted

Ms. Qiu's lofty characteristic of "regarding money lightly but [thinking] highly of righteousness," a virtuous feature conventionally attributed to Confucian gentlemen. In Ms. Qiu's story, she did not know these prisoners personally, and her help to them was explained as the manifestation of her righteousness. The prisoners were grateful for her liberality and did not bother her in the rebellion. People in the locality thus went to her for protection. Although we do not know how Ms. Qiu treated these refugees, the account suggests that Ms. Qiu accepted them and provided them with a place to stay at least.

In this story, both prisoners and refugees were beneficiaries of Ms. Qiu's generosity. The former were a group of people who violated state laws and were deprived of freedom by the government; the government was obliged to provide them with food while they were in custody.⁹³ The latter were registered residents who were supposed to be defended by the local government because its administrative responsibilities included suppressing local rebellions and protecting people's life and property. Thus in this story, Ms. Qiu intruded into the local government's administrative sphere but did not arouse its opposition. Her frequent donations to prisoners imply that she must have gotten permits from the local authority to do so. The local government seems to have been willing to see local people carry a share of its responsibilities for the locality regardless of their gender. In fact, because of the limitations of their administrative influence in the local community, local officials appreciated local power-holders' help in managing local affairs.⁹⁴ In spite of their gender, benevolent women from local wealthy households, such as Ms. Qiu, were favored and even rewarded by the local government because their bounty contributed to its effort to maintain a stabilized and orderly local society. They functioned as active agents in the local community and were viewed as its influential members by local commoners, elite, and officials.

Using household property to relieve the poor was the most frequent strategy that women adopted in local welfare activities. Apart from generous material support, women's talents and wisdom helped local people as well. For example, Ms. Yan 晏氏 was a widow in Ninghua County 寧化縣 of Tingzhou 汀州.

During the Shaoding 紹定 period (1228–1233), bandits intruded into Ninghua County. Local officials all fled. Huang Fu 黃埙, the magistrate of Jiangle County 將樂, commanded two local strongmen, Wang Wanquan 王萬全 and Wang Lun

王倫 to ally with other stockaded villages (*zhai* 寨)⁹⁵ and repel bandits. Ms. Yan was the first one who provided the local army with food. The bandits were thwarted and became angry. They summoned more followers to attack, and the allied *zhai* were unable to defend. Therefore, Ms. Yan herself established a *zhai* beside Mount Huangniu 黃牛山. One day, ten bandits came and demanded women and money. Ms. Yan assembled her tenants and said: "You are the dependents of my family. Although the bandits asked for women, they actually wanted me. If you care about me, then do your best [to protect me]. If you fail, kill me immediately." She removed all her accessories and gave them to the tenants. The tenants were grateful, and determined to exert their utmost strength. Ms. Yan beat the drum herself and asked maidservants to hit gongs to cheer them. The bandits were defeated.⁹⁶

In Ninghua County, the two Wang families were the leading powers in the local community and thus the first from whom the government requested support in the regional crisis.⁹⁷ Ms. Yan did not appear to be a significant power at first, as she did not even own an independent *zhai*. However, she took advantage of the household property to participate in local defense. When she realized that the union of *zhai* did not function competently, she constructed her own *zhai* to guard her family members and affiliated tenants. She proved to be a successful organizer and motivator. Her speech and on-the-spot encouragement moved the tenants, and their triumph helped her earn a local reputation. "People in neighbor villages [thus] knew she was dependable. Many of them led whole families to stay beside Mount Huangniu to take refuge. Some were too poor to support themselves. Ms. Yan used her family grain to feed them, and thus attracted more and more people."⁹⁸ As people increasingly went to her looking for protection, her local influence rose. Again, she used financial aid to relieve the distressed and boost her local prestige. Her power expanded rapidly, which enabled her to launch an alliance with the two Wang families. They reallocated their followers and arranged them in a more effective way. They "built five *zhai* to accommodate [the refugees], and chose young men to serve as volunteers. The five *zhai* worked in concert with each other and attacked enemies from multiple sides. The bandits assaulted several times but did not conquer. Thousands of people thus survived."⁹⁹

After the bandits withdrew, the government officials arrived.

Chen Wei 陳韡, the prefectural administrator of Nanjianzhou 南劍州, sent her money and silk, which she distributed to her followers. Chen Wei also sent paper money to the volunteers in the five *zhai* to express the government's appreciation. Furthermore, he awarded Ms. Yan's son an official title, and entitled her *zhai* "Myriad Peace" (*wan an* 萬安). Ms. Yan's case was reported to the state. The emperor conferred an honorary "Deferential Lady" (*gong ren* 恭人) title and corresponding apparel upon her, and a special "Gentleman of Trust" (*cheng xin lang* 承信郎) title to her son.¹⁰⁰

By bestowing various rewards and titles, the government announced its legitimate authority over unofficial local powers as well as its acknowledgment of Ms. Yu's contribution to the state. The formal honorary titles for Ms. Yan and her son became the family's social capital. The bandits' invasion provided her with a rare opportunity to elevate her *jia* from a common local wealthy household to a power equivalent to the two Wang families in the region. She grabbed the chance and successfully accomplished the transformation with her extraordinary managerial strategies and military leadership. Her heroic endeavors were appreciated by both the populace and government, who did not care about whether or not she intruded into men's conventional and exclusive field of military affairs.

Women achieved good reputation and even awards for themselves and their male relatives due to their contributions to local welfare. As to the reason why women were enthusiastic in relieving the distressed, all epitaphs and eulogies ascribed their generosity to the virtue of benevolence/humanity (*ren* 仁). In the previous examples, Ms. Cai was said to be "benevolent in nature,"¹⁰¹ Ms. Zhuo's nature was identified as liberality,¹⁰² Ms. Qiu was described as a lady who "always regarded money lightly but thought highly of righteousness," which exactly exemplified what *ren* was. *Ren* was the principal concept in Confucian classics and thus the major strand in the view of morality that elite men promoted in Chinese society. The frequent appearance of this word and relevant ideas in women's biographies, epitaphs, and eulogies during the Song period suggests that *ren* was not a gender-specific notion at that time. It was viewed as a universal human virtue rather than a moral trait exclusive to men. Thus women were encouraged to display their philanthropic feature in the local community without regard to gender.¹⁰³

Of course, natural humanity was not the only motive that might lead women to participate in local welfare. In the biography that Wei

Jing wrote for his mother-in-law, Ms. Zhang's generosity was explained in this way: "She was *ren* in nature and loved to donate. She did well in accumulating and wished to dispense. It was because [*ren* was] her natural quality and was not because she presented [*ren*] affectedly to fish for fame and compliment."¹⁰⁴ Here Wei Jing used the examples of Ms. Zhang's participation in local welfare to present her natural gift of *ren*, and he denied the assumption that she acted the part of a benevolent lady simply to earn a reputation. His argument indicates that commitment to local welfare could contribute to a woman's local renown, and pursuing such a prestige could be an incentive to charitable behaviors by women. That is, by arguing that Ms. Zhang was *not* a certain kind of person, Wei revealed his assumption that many others were, as well as his knowledge of the workings of social status that made his assumption plausible. Though many women engaged in local charity probably out of personal moral concern, the consequence of achieving local fame might also have functioned as a practical consideration that induced them (or other women) to do so.

In all the cases above, women gained a philanthropic reputation for their generosity in local society, no matter their original motives. Neo-Confucians perceived their social responsibilities to the local community as one of the distinctive features defining their elite identity, and thus they were committed to the local welfare. However, it seems unreasonable to apply elite males' motivations to women, whose *jia*-centered consciousness invalidated the possibility of pursuing a group identity in the public domain. Their charitable activities were not only appreciated by their beneficiaries; they were also recognized by local elite men, including family members, and in some cases even rewarded by the local government and state. What women did might have brought great honor to their *jia* or even benefited family members, as Ms. Yan did. However, what is discussed in textual sources is their personal fame rather than the collective reputation of their husbands' *jia*. Their liberality was narrated as a personal merit, even though many of them employed household property to act it out. Women were assumed to confine themselves within the *jia* in Confucian classics. Notwithstanding, their dedication to local charity was never questioned but was encouraged by elite men because it conformed to their view of Confucian morality and their own concern for local welfare. The ideology of gender segregation was compromised and allowed a place for the promotion of some general Confucian principles in the context of the construction of local society. Women could identify local welfare work as their personal enterprise and

expect it to be identified as such by others. Therefore, through participating in local welfare, women achieved the opportunity to present and realize their personal social value in the local community as independent individuals. This expectation of self-realization might have been a vital factor that stimulated women to chase local fame.

Women and Public Projects

Women's capacity to offer financial aid to the local people depended upon the authority they established and the skills they cultivated inside the *jia*. However, providing financial support was not the only way in which women contributed to their local community. Women also displayed their commitment to local welfare by engaging in the creation of objects for public use. The investigation of a breadth of local sources of Fujian in the Song period shows that women took leadership or managerial roles in various activities such as building weirs, irrigating farms, constructing roads, repairing bridges, establishing public schools, and so forth. Local people did not necessarily come into direct contact with these female philanthropists, but they became beneficiaries through the consumption of the material products of the public works. These public works made women's involvement in local welfare much more complicated than pure donation of money and necessities. They usually embarked on such works by offering economic assistance, but they continued to supervise or even participated in the projects. Their managerial talent or even specific professional skills influenced and sometimes decided the quality of these public enterprises.

Fujian was a mountainous area on the whole, insufficient in water resources. Building weirs and storing water for farmland irrigation was a major local affair. During the Song period, a great number of water conservancies were constructed in Fujian, among which the *Mulan Pi* 木蘭陂 in Putian County 莆田 was the most famous and effective.¹⁰⁵ Putian was a coastal district, but it lacked irrigation water storage. Early in the Tang period, local people wanted a weir and proposed the idea of building a dam in Lai Brook 瀨溪 to divert the water to storage ponds. Nevertheless, a single young woman in the Northern Song, Qian Siniang 錢四娘, was the first to launch such a project. Putian County was under the administration of Xinghua Command 興化軍, while Qian Siniang's hometown was Changle 長樂 County, which belonged to the neighboring prefecture, Fuzhou. She was an outsider as far as Putian people were concerned. In 1064, she "began the construction of the weir and took from her household's property to employ laborers."¹⁰⁶

Qian Siniang came [to Putian] from Changle County. She donated nine ingots of gold, built a dam in the upper reaches of the brook and in front of Jiangjun Cliff 將軍巖, and excavated a canal at the south-west corner of Mount Gujiao 鼓角山. When the weir was just accomplished, she took wine and boarded a boat to celebrate the completion. While she was drinking rapturously, the watcher of the weir came to report that a sudden overflow of the stream had ruined the weir. She immediately threw herself into the water and died.¹⁰⁷

From the twelfth to nineteenth centuries, at least thirteen steles were erected at the site of the *Mulan Pi* to commemorate the people who constructed, maintained, and repaired it in the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing eras.¹⁰⁸ Qian Siniang, as the initiator, was unavoidably mentioned in all the stone inscriptions. The most elaborate narratives about her are available in the four Song texts (1148, 1205, 1265–1274). But none of them informs us why she was able to expend a large amount of money from her natal family in Changle or why she came all the way to Putian to engage in local irrigation works.¹⁰⁹ Soon after Qian failed, Lin Congshi 林從世, a *jinsi* 進士 degree holder from her hometown, arrived in Putian and spent a considerable amount of money on the construction of the weir, but no extant records suggest any personal or family connection between Qian and Lin. The weir he constructed collapsed before it was finished. The first person who completed the *Mulan Pi* successfully was Li Hong, a wealthy man who came from Houguan County of Fuzhou. The descriptions of his involvement in the *Mulan Pi*'s construction are exhaustive, which interestingly provides us some clues for the cause of Qian Siniang's dedication. In 1205, Lin Danai 林大鼐, an elite man of Putian, composed an essay entitled "Biography of a Venerable Elder—Mr. Li" (*Li Zhangzhe zhuan* 李長者傳) to celebrate Li's contribution to Putian. At the beginning of his biography we read,

Li Hong 李宏 was from Houguan County 侯官 of Fuzhou. His ancestors came to Fuzhou in the Tang dynasty and his family was wealthy for generations. He was untrammelled in character and ambitious. He desired to make use of his household property to establish himself, and to make his achievements and reputation well known to the public. . . . Finally he responded to [the government's] recruitment notice, and came [to Putian].¹¹⁰

Li Hong (1042–ca. 1083) came from the same prefecture as Qian Sinian. He arrived in Putian in the sixth year of the Xining reign 熙寧 (1073), which was eight years later than Qian Siniang's immigration. He possessed plentiful financial resources and aimed at personal prestige. The awkward irrigation system in Putian County, the central government's public notice of recruitment, and the prime minister Cai Jing's 蔡京 (1047–1126) letter of invitation offered Li Hong a suitable opportunity to reach his goal.¹¹¹ Li Hong's story, in Hugh Clark's words, exemplifies that "using private wealth to sponsor public works that benefited the broader community was another avenue to upward social mobility."¹¹² Nevertheless, this kind of concern about social fluidity seemed valueless for an unmarried young woman like Qian Siniang, whose living condition by and large depended upon her future husband's *jia*'s status in social hierarchy. There would presumably have been no official invitation in Qian's time because the Xining reign saw a particular state emphasis on developing local irrigation works.¹¹³ Her construction of *Mulan Pi* was supposed to benefit local people in the absence of government support. Therefore, attaining local fame and realizing her social value could nonetheless have been as attractive a goal for Qian Siniang as it was for Li Hong and could have motivated her involvement in the same sort of project.

During the Song period, an unmarried woman was usually ineligible either to take possession of or to make use of her natal family's household property. However, in this case, Qian Siniang carried a large amount of gold to Putian, which was said to have been worth 100,000 strings of cash.¹¹⁴ This huge amount of wealth is identified as "household property" (*jia zi* 家貲) in the record. Clearly Qian Siniang was from a wealthy family, and from what we know of Song women's property rights, it seems reasonable to suspect that she had inherited a part of the household property from her dead father as the dowry for her future marriage.¹¹⁵ She devoted the money to the construction of a water conservancy in another county under her own name. There are no sources indicating the involvement of her natal family, and her supervision of the project appeared to be a personal behavior. The positive evaluations given to her by Putian people and officials suggest that an unmarried woman's financial contribution to and personal participation in public works in a county not her own was considered acceptable and even welcomed.

Qian Siniang appears from the existing narratives to have been an unconventional woman. The texts mention that she recruited workers in Putian, although they do not reveal more details about her personal

participation. She boated on the river and drank wine to celebrate the completion of the weir, which suggested the manner of an untrammelled and emotional elite man. During the Song, women's suicide was usually related to the issue of chastity. Yet Qian Siniang committed suicide out of grief at the ruin of a water-control project. Her vehement reaction showed the extraordinary value she placed upon the enterprise. "Seven days after her death, her corpse appeared on the surface of the water. Its aromatic smell was transmitted far and near. Local people built a temple to commemorate and offer sacrifices to her. Every windy and rainy night, people saw two lanterns passing the *Mulan Pi*. The elders said that Siniang was patrolling the weir."¹¹⁶ Her passionate commitment to the project and the dramatic tragedy that she experienced had such an impact on local people that she was exalted and reconstructed as a benevolent deity protecting the weir despite the collapse of her work.

Qian Siniang's statue was placed side by side with Lin Congshi's and Li Hong's in the shrine.¹¹⁷ In the two centuries after her death, many local elite men in Putian, such as Xu Duo 徐鐸 (eleventh century),¹¹⁸ Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 (1113–1186),¹¹⁹ Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269),¹²⁰ and Wu Shugao 吳叔告 (1193–1265),¹²¹ visited her shrine respectfully and left poems to eulogize her exceptional deed. These local celebrities undoubtedly viewed Qian as a worthy and heroic pioneer in advocating local welfare and recognized her extraordinary contribution, despite the failure of her project. Both Qian Siniang and Lin Congshi invested substantial wealth and failed. Ideally speaking, the latter should have aroused more resonance among elite men because of their common cultural identity and sense of social responsibility. But in reality, the former attained more records and praise than the latter, rendering her reputation better known, at least from the thirteenth century on. It is decided by the unprecedentedness of Qian's effort and is also related to her female identity and dramatic suicide. The indiscriminate sacrifice to Qian and other male weir builders in the same shrine invoked Liu Kezhuang's anxiety.¹²² He proposed two separate shrines, for Qian and the male deities respectively, and requested two different honorary titles for Qian and Li Hong, who used to share the same enfeoffment.¹²³ In this case, Liu's concern for gender separation did not conceal the female deity's image but highlighted her unusualness and made her presence more conspicuous, which gave rise to more writings about her in later history.

Qian Siniang did not undertake this project in response to government recruitment as Li Hong did. Otherwise, it would be inexplicable that no local officials were present at the moment of the completion of

the project or even knew of her death until “the village junior officer (*li zheng* 里正) reported the affair to the government right after Ms. Qian died.” The construction of the *Mulan Pi* was a massive project. The local government must have known of Qian Siniang’s voluntary dedication as soon as she arrived to launch the work as a foreigner. However, it seems that the government did not interfere in her venture. They neither supported nor opposed her work publicly. The government’s acquiescence suggests that they viewed a woman’s active participation in local public works not as something shocking but as quite acceptable. The local administrators appeared at the end of the story only to investigate the cause of Qian Siniang’s death thoroughly and conclude there were no other reasons for her suicide. The magistrate was said to have been moved by her ambition and integrity and to have felt horrified at her suicide by sighing that “Ms. Qian was an unmarried woman. She was ambitious and upright. What a pity that she died before she realized her goal.”¹²⁴ The local government adopted a passively accepting attitude throughout the case. More than one century after Qian’s death, the state finally confirmed her value through the official recognition of local people’s divinization of Qian Siniang upon the request of local magistrates.

As for Qian Siniang’s participation in the construction of the *Mulan Pi*, the primary sources tell us only that she donated household property and recruited the laborers. One is tempted to think that her work could not have been limited to these two aspects, considering her great devotion to the project.¹²⁵ Her contribution to the construction of a local water conservancy work rather than womanly virtue attracted the attention of contemporary men, who did not question the appropriateness of her behaviors. She herself earned the local people’s respect, elite men’s acclaim, and the state’s posthumous enfeoffment. Public works were not women’s traditional field, where women were not supposed to present their talents. However, in Qian Siniang’s story the sense of gender discrimination was diluted because gender concern was usually subordinated to elite men’s and state’s support for local society. Male authors termed women “humane (*ren* 仁),” “righteous (*yi* 義),” and “incorruptible (*jie* 節).” These universal Confucian principles weighed over gendered moral traits in Confucian scholars’ accounts and justified women’s activities in the domain outside the *jia*.

Elite men’s agreement to women’s involvement in public projects and the government’s occasional endorsement gave rise to many women’s participation in local irrigation works other than Qian Siniang. For example,

Chen Ji's 陳璣 other name was Shiba Niang 十八娘. She was Chen Hongjin's 陳洪進 daughter.¹²⁶ She once donated her hairpins and bracelets to buy land and dig a ditch eight *chi* 尺 in depth, two *chi* in width, and fifteen *li* 里 in length, starting from Fengting 楓亭 and ending at Yiban Brook 驛坂溪 of Huian County 惠安. It was used for irrigation, and called "the ditch of the golden hairpin" (*jīn chái gōu* 金釵溝). The village there was called "Golden Hairpin Village" (*jīn chái zhūang* 金釵莊). She personally planted litchi trees [along the ditch], which have [for this reason] been called "*shī ba niang* 十八娘" till now.¹²⁷

Chen Ji sold items from her jewelry box to make a ditch, leading water from Huian to Fengting for irrigation. The trees that she planted along the ditch could have functioned as an effective protection of the project, which suggested her personal dedication to the enterprise. Both the ditch and the village were entitled "Golden Hairpin." It implied local people's appreciation of Chen Ji's economic contribution to the project and explicitly conveyed their recognition of the gender identity of the donor. Decorative accessories such as hairpins counted as women's personal belongings and provided them with a distinct source of property that men seldom took advantage of.

The litchi trees that Chen Ji planted along the ditch were her favorite. In the *Lizhi pu* 荔枝譜, a work by the prominent Northern Song author Cai Xiang 蔡襄, it is said that "*Shi ba niang* litchi is dark red and spindly. People today compare young girls to it. A folktale says that the vassal of Min 閩王 had a daughter who ranked eighteenth among his children. She loved eating it so that it was called [*shī ba niang*]."¹²⁸ As this litchi variety was Chen Ji's personal favorite, it was given her name by the local people. The name itself suggested that Chen Ji must have been a legendary figure in Xianyou County; otherwise, it would be hard to explain why a housebound woman's appetite aroused commoners' attention. It seems reasonable to connect the litchi's name to Chen Ji's contribution to local public works, although we do not have enough evidence to support this assumption. Chen Ji incorporated her personal taste into the irrigation works by planting her favorite trees there. And her story and fame might have been transmitted to other localities accompanying the dissemination of this specific variety in a much broader area. In Chen Ji's story, the golden hairpins and the litchi trees were the two objects signifying a woman's participation in local

public projects, among which the latter even became an icon reminding people of her presence. After she died, she was buried in a local temple, and *shi ba niang* litchi trees were planted beside her grave as her distinctive symbol.¹²⁹

In the above two cases, Qian was a single woman, while Chen's marriage status was not indicated. Their male relatives, in particular husbands, were absent from the projects they promoted. However, this should not be taken to imply that women could only participate in such works when their spouses were not present. In fact, examples of collaboration by couples in public projects also exist. In Changtai 長泰 County, during the Jiading period 嘉定 (1208–1224), a Mr. Chen donated more than two hundred forty *mu* 畝 of land to build a weir for the irrigation of Zhangxin 彰信 farmland. He was venerated by the local people and called "the revered senior Mr. Chen (*Chen qi gong* 陳耆公)." His wife "aided him in building the weir, and did her utmost to manage the project (*xiegong kaipei jingying jieli* 協公開陂經營竭力)."¹³⁰ The size of Mr. Chen's land donation suggests a project of massive size; perhaps this made it impossible to handle it by himself, so that his wife entered the picture as a reliable assistant. This is speculative, but whatever the circumstances of her involvement, the fact that the source takes the trouble to mention the wife indicates people's appreciation of her capability in managing the project as something that contributed to its success. In contrast to those women who took charge of their projects independently, Mr. Chen's wife did not (as far as the sources tell us) present herself as taking the leading role in the project. Although women's involvement in public works was acceptable, the subsidiary position here attributed to Mr. Chen's wife implies an assumption—in order to legitimize their active performances in the public field, women should accord with conventional domestic gender relationships and respect husbands' authority when they functioned outside the *jia* in their husbands' lifetimes. In this respect, women without husbands seem to have enjoyed more freedom than those who resided together with husbands: they could openly display their own leadership and agency in public projects.

Besides water conservancy works, women also took part in the construction of transportation facilities such as bridges and roads, which benefited large numbers of local people just as irrigation projects did. However, unlike water conservancy works, the construction and repair of bridges and roads had distinctive religious implications in Song society. As John Kieschnick points out, at latest in the third century, the Buddhist notion of viewing the construction of a bridge as a key source of

merit had been introduced to the Chinese, and it “had become a part of the fabric of everyday life” by the Song.¹³¹ In China, the bridge was “a symbol of charity, compassion, and good governance, ideas that weighed heavily on the minds of various figures on the local scene, including monks, officials, and prominent members of the community, when the need for a bridge became apparent.”¹³² Among these local agents, women, regardless of their religious approaches, played crucial roles that their male counterparts could not ignore, although the examples of men’s involvement greatly outnumbered those of women in textual records.¹³³

In some cases, women were said to merely provide financial support to the projects. For example, in Putian *li* 莆田里 of Putian County 莆田縣, “In the third year of the Shaosheng 紹聖 period (1096), Ms. Zhou 周氏 as well as Ms. Chen 陳氏 donated money to build [Zhou Cuo Bridge (*zhou cuo qiao* 周厝橋)] and a road.”¹³⁴ The bridge was the collaborative contributions of a pair of women. Although the text does not mention the relationship between the two women, it suggests that collaboration among women on such public works was not unusual. And again we find that married couples’ contributions are also recorded in local gazetteers. In Lianjiang County 連江縣, “Gao Tianyi 高天宜 and wife, Ms. Chen 陳氏, donated one thousand [strings’ worth of] paper money to build a road two hundred *zhang* 丈 long.”¹³⁵ The couple had their names inscribed on a stele and erected it beside the road.

In these examples, the origins of women’s donations, although unstated, were presumably either personal or household properties. Scholars’ investigation of Song women’s property rights has been focused on dowries and inheritances. And women’s personal properties presumably consisted of what they received from their natal families before and after marriage. Nevertheless, one record from Fujian in the Yuan era shows that women participated in local projects by capitalizing on another important type of personal properties that scholars have ignored so far. In the sixteenth ward 十六都 of Ningde County 寧德縣, “two unmarried young ladies accumulated money through weaving. They bought six loaves of stone bricks [to build a bridge].”¹³⁶ The two Yuan women’s weaving skill enabled them to contribute to local public projects. I assume such cases happened in the Song as well. In the Song era, the government collected textiles from individual households as tax, and weaving was a basic skill for women, whether they were from elite or commoner families. Being aware of it or not, numerous women assumed their orthodox gender roles through weaving and acted in accordance with the classical division of labor—“men till and

women weave.” In addition to its symbolic social value, weaving was also an important means for women to earn income for their families and themselves. Patricia Ebrey notices “the commercialization of the Sung economy meant that families could see the monetary value of women’s textile work,” but doubts it enhanced women’s authority or autonomy.¹³⁷ She perceives the work of weaving as household work and the income from it as family income. By analyzing poetry, she claims “no literatus seems to have noticed” “the women who sold their textiles gained a greater sense of self-worth in the process.”¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the Ningde example has convinced me that women had substantial control over their personal weaving earnings. The two women treated the income as their own rather than household income and spent it on a public works project that seemed unrelated to their *jia*. I suspect they got a great “sense of self-worth” by participating in the market to sell their handicrafts and buy construction material. The dominance of weaving income could apply to not only unmarried young women, as is evident in the Ningde case, but also wives who were household property managers. For example, a Song Fujianese, Yang Zhen 楊鎮, remarried after his first wife died. When his son Yang Xingzong 楊興宗 studied at the Imperial Academy, the stepmother sent him several ounces of gold. She said the money was what she had earned by weaving, and she used it to sponsor his study. The stepson was grateful and determined to repay her support.¹³⁹ In the Yang family, neither the stepmother nor the son took it for granted that a married woman’s weaving income should flow into the common purse of her husband’s family. Furthermore, Chen Fuliang 陳傅良 (1136–1203), the writer of the stepmother’s epitaph, did not see it as a problem either.

In addition to dowries and inheritances, Song women’s weaving earnings, although probably limited in amount, were a significant source of their agency, as the examples from Fujian and other places have shown.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, in comparison to women who wove to pay tax in impoverished households, women in families that had fewer economic burdens might have more opportunities to take advantage of the commercialization of textile production and maneuver weaving profit to advance the interest of themselves or their families. In the poems that Patricia Ebrey cites, we see “the increased penetration of the market into household production of textiles just made the lives of women harder.”¹⁴¹ But by examining weaving women in Chinese literary tradition, we know their misfortune had become a popular motif to express male authors’ dissatisfaction with government oppression of the poor by the

Tang.¹⁴² It appeared in Song poems as a topos that writers inherited from their predecessors, although it may reflect social reality to some extent. One may fail to notice weaving women's "authority or autonomy" in the poetic laments but find it impossible to disregard in some writings that accidentally touch on women's weaving earnings. Therefore, the investigation of such sources proves necessary because they present more aspects of women's weaving experience than the stereotypical verses. In sum, the weaving income not only increased a woman's value and her self-consciousness of it in the *jia*, natal family if she was unmarried or husband's family if she was married, it also expanded her social space and made her engagement in local community feasible.

In contrast to the above examples that specify women's economic support, many records of women's participation in transportation projects are rather general in content and do not provide any detailed information other than time, place, and builder's name. The most typical narrative pattern is as in this example: "Loutou Bridge 漏頭橋—built in the fourth year during the Chunxi 淳熙 period (1177) by a woman of [Jingde 景德] *li* 里, the elder sister of Chen Wanyi 陳萬一."¹⁴³ In a local gazetteer, a bridge was listed under the heading of the specific *li* in which it was situated. The female subject who made it was called *li fu* 里婦—a woman residing in the *li*. The name of a man indicated from which family she came.¹⁴⁴ And the verb that described the woman's action—*jian* 建—was ambiguous. It implied financial contribution but did not necessarily suggest physical work, although it literally meant "build." Therefore, it is still unknown to what extent the woman engaged in the construction project. She could have acted as donor, fundraiser,¹⁴⁵ supervisor, or (conceivably) onsite work participant, as the nature of the primary sources makes it hard for us to identify her concrete role.

During the Song, a large number of bridges' names reflected the stories of their construction, among which female builders' gender identity was prominent. For example, in Huian County 惠安縣 of Quanzhou 泉州, there was one bridge "built by Chen Baniang 陳八娘 of the Hu 胡 family during the Shaoxi 紹熙 period (1190–1194), and thus called '*niang zi qiao* 娘子橋,'" ¹⁴⁶ which meant "Bridge of the Lady." This name might have been given by the local people to demonstrate their appreciation of Chen Baniang's contribution. Of course, such gendered titles were not applied only to bridges: we find them on irrigation works, too. For example, at the summit of Mount Lingyuan 靈源山 in Jinjiang County 晉江縣, there was a well called Wu Sixth-Daughter's Well (*Wu Liuniang jing* 吳六娘井). "According to the Song local gazetteers, a lady

named Wu Sixth-Daughter (Wu Liuniang 吳六娘) lived on the back of the mountain and dug this well. Therefore, it was given this name.”¹⁴⁷

As a substantial object, a named bridge survived its builder and transmitted her fame to later generations in the local community for as long as it stood. In Guangze County 光澤縣, “in the sixth year of the Xuanhe 宣和 period (1124), Ms. Chen 陳氏, the wife of Yan Bohe 嚴伯和 of this *li*, built a bridge. It was thus called Mrs. Yan Bridge (*yan po qiao* 嚴婆橋). In the twelfth year of the Chunyou 淳祐 period (1252), it was washed away by flood.”¹⁴⁸ It proved a lasting piece of work and stood for about 130 years before it was ruined by flood at the end of the Song. One and a half centuries later a new bridge was built, and it experienced reconstruction several times in the Ming period.¹⁴⁹ It was initially named *yan po qiao*, to commemorate Ms. Chen’s devotion. Although the name was changed by the rebuilders, the Ming-Qing local gazetteers still trace the history of the bridge back to Ms. Chen. Its prolonged existence in the Song and consistent records in the Ming-Qing local sources show that the material product attributed to a woman in the sphere outside the *jia* evidenced and exhibited her work, and thus it helped disseminate and preserve her fame in the public domain even long after her death.

The operation of a local project normally demanded careful and miscellaneous collaboration of large-scale material and human resources. Although responsible for it in official rhetoric, a local government usually could not fully commit itself to such an arduous task and would expect local elites to take an alternative leadership role. In addition to elite men, women were also actively engaged in the construction of local works. The property rights of Song women as well as the reality of their management of household property, whether they were unmarried daughters, wives, or widows, enabled them to participate as sponsors in their own names. In addition to financial support, their intellectual and labor contributions to local works demonstrated their managerial, communication, and even professional technical talents in the public domain, which impressed and benefited local commoners, elites, and officials. Women’s efforts of self-realization in the spheres outside the *jia* served the lofty Confucian goal of public good. Therefore, although women’s autonomy aroused Confucian moralists’ anxieties in many cases, its application in the realm of public works was neither degraded nor criticized because of the agents’ gender identity. Women’s extraordinary public deeds were welcomed, eulogized, and commemorated by elite males, who left us precious records to appreciate the possible rise and spread of the culture of local “voluntarism” among Song women.¹⁵⁰



Women and Local Governments

Local governments at the county, prefecture, and circuit levels were the only authorized official organizations responsible for the management of local communities in the Song period. Local officials—males who all received Confucian education and mostly passed civil service examinations—took charge of governmental administration. In handling a multitude of local affairs, they maneuvered legitimate public power to put their classical learning into practice. Song women were ideally supposed to remain in the inner quarters and stay away from the exertion of public authority by local officials. However, constituting half the population recorded in local governments' registers, they came into contact with local governments for manifold reasons through multiple channels, either actively or reluctantly. To explicate women's connections with local governments, I will divide Song Fujian women into two categories. Elite women, especially the relatives of local officials, comprise the first group, and all other women the second.¹ Naturally, women in the former category enjoyed a closer relationship with local bureaucrats than women in the latter. Thus, on the one hand, they were prone to take advantage of kinship ties to influence local administration, while on the other hand, they might become easily accessible human resources that officials manipulated to deal with local affairs. The second category of women constituted the majority of Fujian's female residents. On the one hand, local governments were obliged to handle some economic, legal, and cultural issues related to these women's daily life, while on the other

hand these women might go to local governments voluntarily, claiming rights that they assumed were protected by state authority.

Women's Participation in Local Administration

Classical Confucian gender norms were widely acknowledged in the elite discourse and became general rules guiding women's everyday life; nevertheless, these principles found in texts were never faithfully followed by Song women (or by all Song men) in reality. Women from commoners' families had to go out seeking living resources, whereas elite females occasionally explored the broad world outside the *jia*, sometimes with male relatives' company. In addition to physical movement outside the *jia*, women entered a variety of public domains and functioned as significant agents whom men could not ignore in the construction of local society as the former chapter on women and local community has shown. Furthermore, examples of female family members' interference in administrative affairs, which was at odds with Confucian prescriptions, are available from a variety of primary sources left by Song scholars.

In the writing of epitaphs, elite authors praised women who encouraged office-holding male relatives' sincere attitudes and commitment toward government affairs. For instance, Ms. Chen 陳氏, the widowed mother of Qiu Licao 丘李曹, was said to be very strict in admonishing her son. She supervised his studies in spite of poverty, and viewed his success in civil service examination as the fulfillment of her commitment to her husband. When Qiu was in the post of the county magistrate of Chong'an 崇安, she, according to Lin Xiyi's 林希逸 (1193–1271) narrative, often said, "Whether felons die or live, whether thieves' punishment be severe or gentle, is initially decided by local officials specializing in legal affairs. If you are not prudent while dealing with these affairs, your qualities of honesty and uprightness will be worthless."² She attempted to instruct her son on how to be a qualified judicial magistrate, and her words suggest that she was familiar with local administrators' duties. Her concern for local administration influenced her son's career attitude, and her understanding of personal integrity was in accordance with the Confucian value of moral self-cultivation.

Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 also exemplified his appreciation of a mother's assertion of the authority in advising sons on the proper way of administration. Ms. Cai, Liu Wanshu's 劉萬枢 wife, told her sons that incorruptibility was the foundation of official career and offered them timely and valuable advice. One of her sons was the local magistrate

of Dangtu 當塗. “The local administration of Dangtu was [orderly] as if an ancient respectable officer [were in the post of local magistrate]. People said the mother’s instruction actually made it that way.”³ Ms. Cai warned her son at home, and local people attributed his administrative aptitude to her inner-*jia* admonition. Mothers’ conversations with sons occurred inside the *jia*, while the ideas about state business conveyed by their words were transmitted to and functioned in the outer world. Both Lin Xiyi and Zhen Dexiu were sons in elite families and took up civil positions at local and state levels. The examples of mothers’ attention to office-holding sons’ administration very likely aroused the emotional resonance—affection of, respect for, and gratitude to mothers among these narrators as well as the male elite readers on the basis of their common domestic experience.

Although the domestic hierarchy decided wives did not enjoy the same authority to influence husbands as mothers did, many Song Fujian elite women in official families showed a distinctly serious interest in their spouses’ political agendas.⁴ Fang Dacong 方大琮 (1183–1247) wrote a eulogy for his wife, Ms. Lin 林氏, and recalled that “whenever the couple had leisure time, Ms. Lin talked about all her grandfather’s exemplary experience, without omitting any event. Sometimes she expressed her thoughts and feelings on the matters that she mentioned, but would not skip or add a minor detail.”⁵ Ms. Lin’s grandfather was a well-known high official. And his “exemplary experience” introduced by Ms. Lin was absolutely not merely in the handling of his family affairs. As a successful official’s granddaughter, Ms. Lin was acquainted with her grandfather’s official responsibilities through either personal contact or other family members’ transmission in her natal *jia*. She took advantage of this knowledge to aid her husband in governmental administration. Once married, an elite woman’s material property (dowry) and networking resources transferred to her husband’s family with her physical relocation. Moreover, the intellectual wealth that she herself accumulated might also add to the prosperity of the husband’s *jia*, depending on her capability of communicating with her husband. Ms. Lin obviously impressed her husband with her intelligence, considering the fact that her husband appreciated her concern for outer affairs, and portrayed her as his “beneficial friend and good advisor (*yiyou lianggui* 益友良規).”⁶

His use of the term “beneficial friend” for his wife is curious and significant. The relationship between husband and wife and that between friends are both considered fundamental and significant in the Confucian “five relations.” Although the former is characterized by a woman’s

subordination to a man, the latter represents equality and indicates common intellectual interests or political pursuits.⁷ The pleasant interaction between the Fang couple blurred the sense of gender in their relationship, cultivated an unusual form of friendship in the domestic context, and justified the wife's involvement in the husband's government affairs in the Confucian discourse. The three protagonists in the above examples were all highly educated elite women. Residing in the inner quarters, they learned about outer affairs actively and discussed governmental issues with husbands or sons to support their administration. And most important, they were praised for doing so by male relatives and unknown contemporaries who came from similar family backgrounds.

In addition to providing moral admonishment in general, some elite women offered concrete practical suggestions on the basis of their profound knowledge of administrative affairs. For instance, the wife of a prominent neo-Confucian scholar Yang Shi 楊時 (1053–1135), Ms. Yu 余氏, was “a wise and judicious woman with many brilliant ideas.” Her involvement in local public service was recorded in a Qing Fujian local gazetteer exhaustively:

When Yang Shi was the local magistrate of Xiaoshan 蕭山 [modern Xiaoshan county of Zhejiang Province], the county suffered drought. He was worried about it, and planned to dig lakes in waterlogged lowlands to store water and thus irrigate farmlands. His wife heard about it and said to him, “You are wrong. I think that the reservoir should be located on high land, so that once the floodgate is opened, water can be released to all waterways of every village. The lakes in waterlogged lowlands are low-lying. It is easy to store up water, but difficult to release water from them. How could they help [relieve drought]?” Yang Shi was greatly enlightened, and, so dug a lake on the high land west of the city.⁸

Irrigation works had decisive influence on agricultural productivity, and thus were a major concern of Song local officials. For the Xiaoshan water project, Yang Shi shouldered both bureaucratic and moral obligations because of his dual identities—an officeholder responsible for people's livelihood as well as a neo-Confucian scholar devoted to local welfare. However, the management of water works required expert knowledge and practical training that most elite men did not get before they entered the bureaucratic system. Generally speaking, they could consult

clerks and local professionals while handling such concrete technical matters. According to the local gazetteers of Xiaoshan composed in the Ming period, Yang Shi carefully investigated the site and considered colleagues' and local people's opinions.⁹ In addition, he talked about the construction of public works with his wife as the excerpt shows. It is hard to tell whether Ms. Yu got the knowledge about irrigation works from her personal observation, textual learning, or oral teaching.¹⁰ Unlike the morally exhortative mothers and wives in the earlier examples, Ms. Yu straightforwardly criticized her husband's plan on technical grounds, and attempted to change his thinking through specific analysis. Without a doubt, she must have realized that her statement would influence the local government's decision on a public project if she convinced her husband of her idea. In contrast to his authoritative image as a patriarch in the neo-Confucian lineage, Yang Shi, in real life, gladly accepted his wife's criticism and suggestion after hearing her explanation of crucial principles of water conservancy. Of course, Ms. Yu had no channels to record and circulate her conversation with her husband, which interestingly was preserved in the historical record. The transmission of this story implies that Yang Shi appreciated his wife's talent in the public field, and wished to let people outside the *jia* know her contribution to local public service.

According to the local gazetteer, the completed reservoir benefited the locality. "The lake is discharged and closed in a timely fashion, and [local irrigation] still relies on it till now (the nineteenth century). It is called '*xianghu* 湘湖.' People discussing water conservancy treat Ms. Yu's utterance as a principle."¹¹ Ms. Yu's advantages in technical knowledge over her husband as well as Yang Shi's recognition of women's agency in administrative matters won her local respect. And the durable water project sustained her reputation throughout the long late imperial period. Yang Shi was the state-authorized manager who initiated and organized this massive water project. He was enshrined by Xiaoshan people in the Song time and recorded in the local official histories of Xiaoshan ever since.¹² However, in the above narrative collected in the Fujian gazetteer, Ms. Yu was presented as the contributive protagonist, and her argument was still acknowledged as the standard view on local water conservancy that people drew upon hundreds of years after her death. Ms. Yu's story supplements our understanding of women's agency in the construction of local public works, which was likely to be overlooked unless they unusually substituted for men in assuming leading roles like Qian Siniang did.¹³

The Fujian elite women discussed above were indirectly involved in administrative affairs because of their male relatives' official identities and obligations. In the course of their upbringing and marriages they must have absorbed various knowledge related to public affairs through multiple channels. The learning process must have been long. It was unrealistic for elite women to start their study of public affairs after their husbands or sons had accepted official assignments. It seems rather possible that they had already begun accumulating related knowledge when they observed surroundings and received fundamental education in natal families. Most elite wives and mothers originated also from elite families, and were offered opportunities to study. Their future spouses were assumed to come from similar families, and very likely would participate in civil service examinations. As for their sons, they could supervise their education, and support them in taking examinations, but again could not be sure about the results. Beverly Bossler has studied the prevalence of literacy among Song elite women, and pointed out Song families instructed their daughters in the classics and poetry by taking into account that a boy's education began with these two.¹⁴ But in addition to the classics and poetry, I assume it might have been a common practice for such women to be taught and know something about public affairs before married, whether their husbands and sons engaged in administrative affairs or not in the end.¹⁵ There might even have been a mother to daughter transmission of technical knowledge so that they could better fulfill their duties as mothers of officialdom-bound sons. In that way, they could aid male family members' management of state business if these men took official posts. And also they could give them advice on public issues that their families were involved in even if they did not achieve official employment.¹⁶

Female members of local officials' families influenced local public affairs in an opaque way, which was unauthorized but tolerable and sometimes effective. In three of the cases we have seen it is hard to judge the specific effects, if any, of the women's advice; but just as interesting and important in all the four cases is that male authors were willing to praise women for offering advice and expertise on public matters. As Bossler has noticed, Song elite men, even though they appreciated women's literacy in many cases, expressed worries about it because it enhanced women's autonomy on the one hand and blurred gender hierarchies on the other hand. A literate woman might "outshine" her husband and her literary talent was "associated with fame and reputation" which was "unseemly in women."¹⁷ However, in elite families, women's display

of wisdom and expression of opinions on male relatives' administrative affairs remained unknown to the public unless the men intended to share their domestic experience with outsiders. As the above examples have shown, women who gave advice were never visible practitioners of their ideas since they had no legitimate roles in the bureaucratic system, and thus posed no threat to the men who consulted them. In contrast to their ambivalent attitudes toward women's writing talent in general, a great deal of elite men benefited from and were eager to present their wives' or mothers' contributive as well as supplementary work in caring for their political careers. It thus resulted in the proliferation of such records in Fujian women's epitaphs throughout the Song period.¹⁸ Women's different family backgrounds and personal experiences gave rise to the diversity of their individual knowledge about public affairs and potential influence on local administration. Nevertheless, their learning was consistently presented as having benefited the male officials in their families in the above examples. Women were represented positively for being able to give good advice and thus intervene from behind the scenes. This greatly complicates the conventional view that Song men believed women should be confined to the *jia* or had no proper role in public life, for in all these cases their impact on public affairs beyond the *jia*, or the potential to exert such impact, was celebrated.

Although male authors recorded women's influence on sons and husbands in terms of administration, women usually concealed their images in the inner quarters while affecting governmental affairs through their office-holding male relatives in men's writing. These moral exemplars' appearance in the "outer affairs" field was witnessed, accepted, and even praised by elite men in epitaphs. In contrast, some Song Fujian women from elite families did not hesitate to expose their presence to people outside their *jia*, and endeavored to interfere in state administration openly. They took advantage of personal influence, exercised through family connections, to intervene in the workings of the bureaucratic government. Such aggressive images of women were generally invisible in commemorative biographies, but were not necessarily perceived negatively when presented in sources of other varieties.

Zhu Xi's letter to the wife of his father's close friend, Liu Ziyu 劉子羽 (1097–1146), offers an example of one such woman. At Zhu Song's 朱松 (1097–1143) request, Liu Ziyu took care of Zhu's son and wife who went to Liu in Chong'an 崇安 after his death in 1143. Liu Ziyu treated Zhu Xi as his own son, and invited his younger brother Liu Zihui 劉子翬 (1101–1147) as well as two other prominent Fujian scholars to tutor

Zhu Xi, who eventually became a prominent scholar and official. Zhu Xi very much appreciated this father-like sponsor's help, cherished his intimate relationship with the Liu family, and kept in touch with the Liu family members throughout his whole life. A letter written by Zhu Xi to Ms. Zhuo 卓氏, Liu Ziyu's wife, provides us a specific example illustrating the communication between Zhu Xi and the most esteemed female figure in the Liu family, and an elite woman's overt participation in administrative affairs:

I heard that you had intended to pursue a *ganguan*¹⁹ 幹官 assignment for my fifth brother. Was it true? But I really think you should not. . . . Young men in such posts are arrogant and arbitrary, and become ignorant even while dealing with concrete affairs. I think you can pursue a relatively junior position for the fifth brother. [In that kind of position,] he will be subjected to senior officials' abuse, and follow their directions, which would prepare him for future accomplishment. If you persist in landing a *ganguan* position for him, you will put him in a wrong place, and ruin his whole life.²⁰

Zhu Xi had lived with the Liu family members in his youth, and the fifth brother he mentioned in the letter was Liu Ping 劉坪 (1138–1185). Liu Ping was Liu Ziyu's youngest son, and was adopted by Liu Zihui, who had no descendant. According to this letter, Ms. Zhuo was attempting to give her biological son, Liu Ping, a good start in his professional official career although he was no longer formally her son in the Liu family tree. Liu Ziyu died in 1146 when Liu Ping was only eight years old. By the time of the letter, Zhu Xi had already passed the civil service examinations, been assigned to several posts, and accumulated some administrative experience. Thus in this letter, Zhu Xi presented his knowledge of the current bureaucracy and gave Ms. Zhuo realistic advice on Liu Ping's pursuit of administrative assignments. The text implies that Ms. Zhuo did not inform Zhu Xi of her plan, but does not mention where he heard the news. It might have been one of the Liu relatives, or some official whom Ms. Zhuo contacted for her son's appointment.

Liu Ziyu had three sons, among whom the two younger ones were adopted by his brothers. His legitimate son Liu Gong 劉珙 (1122–1178) was the eldest, by his first wife, not Ms. Zhuo. Liu Gong passed the civil service examination in the capital in 1142, and was very successful in his later bureaucratic life not only in local posts but also in the

central government, reaching as high as chief minister. Theoretically, when a father had died, older brothers would help younger ones with their pursuit of office. However, from the letter we know that it was Ms. Zhuo who took charge of promoting Liu Ping's career. Although she had access to fewer resources than the eldest stepson in the public sphere, she seemed to exert more authority in arranging junior male family members' outer affairs. The source of her power seems to have been her status as a widow as well as a mother of a powerful official in the Liu family. And she took advantage of the network and social capital of the Liu family to realize the goal outside the *jia*. Although unstated, the resources that Ms. Zhuo manipulated presumably include the wealth, reputation and social connections of her deceased husband and probably even her natal family, and the high position of her stepson. Liu Gong appeared to be the most appropriate person for Ms. Zhuo to consult. Actually, Zhu Xi suggested her to inquire of Liu Gong about *gangan* assignments at the end of the letter. However, we still do not know whether Liu Gong had been involved in his brother's assignment or not at that moment as no other sources on the affair survive.

Zhu Xi was a major male character interfering in Ms. Zhuo's plan. He did not question but recognized and respected Ms. Zhuo's authority on this matter although the adoption had legally invalidated the parental relationship between Ms. Zhuo and Liu Ping. He suggested that she adjust her original approach by pointing out the negative influences of *gangan* assignments on young men's official career. In Zhu Xi's view, *gangan* assignments were easy and comfortable positions for young elite and thus not conducive to good character or useful learning. In contrast, the comfort and ease of such a position may well have appealed to Ms. Zhuo as she was pursuing a position for her favorite biological son. Liu Gong's attitude toward his stepmother's plan is unknown. Whether Zhu Xi discussed the matter with Liu Gong or not, the receiver of this critical letter was Ms. Zhuo, and the figure Zhu ultimately strove to persuade was Ms. Zhuo. Zhu clearly realized that Ms. Zhuo occupied the authoritative position in treating this affair, and he would be obliged to accept her final decision, be it in accordance with his view or not. Liu Ping's two *gangan* appointments suggest that Ms. Zhuo did not give up on her initial plan after receiving Zhu Xi's persuasive letter, which might have saddened Zhu Xi who could do nothing more to change her mind.²¹

In comparison to women like Ms. Zhuo who managed her son's official career, some women went even further in interfering in governmental affairs. They were represented in the sources as entering the outer

world aggressively, severely challenging the existing social order. These (in some cases) aroused elite men's resentment and were finally punished by government authority. Ms. Liu 劉氏 from Shunchang County 順昌 was such an example.

Lady Eighty-seven of the Guan Family and her sons had been fierce and brutal for dozens of years. They broke the law unscrupulously, and poisoned civilians throughout the county as well as outside merchants and travelers. . . . Sister-in-law Eighty-seven's surname is Liu; she is in custody in Xinzhou 信州. She became more presumptuous as she grew older. Her eldest son is Guan Qianyi 官千乙, whose first name is Rixin 日新. Her second son is Guan Qianer 官千二, whose first name is Shisu 世肅. He got an official title through tribute of grain to the government. He is now a legal officer (*xiwei* 西尉) of Poyang 鄱陽. She has two grandsons; one is Guan Qiansan 官千三, whose first name is Yan 衍. They were all evil, and supported each other. . . . They monopolized the whole county's administrative power. The Guan family built two salt storehouses, stored and smuggled salt, encroached on the state's tax income, harmed Shunchang County for over two decades, paralyzed local administration, and caused successive local magistrates to be dismissed.²²

The record above is from the *Minggong shupan qingmingji* 名公書判清明集, a valuable collection of legal cases in the Song dynasty.²³ The author of this case, Judge Liu 劉寺丞, stated at the beginning of his narrative, "When I first arrived at my official post [in Shunchang], I visited the local people and investigated their hardships. At that time I already knew Lady Eighty-Seven in the Guan family and her sons' names."²⁴ Ms. Liu had been called Lady Eighty-Seven since the time when she was married to the Guan family. In the local magistrate's account, Ms. Liu's name was identified as the main culprit, while the other two major male criminals in the Guan family were merely mentioned as her sons. Judge Liu's record indicates that both Shunchang's local people and officials viewed Ms. Liu as the principal offender. Ms. Liu's husband is absent from the judge's narrative. He must have died at least thirty years before; otherwise Ms. Liu could not have played a leading role in the Guan family's crimes. Ms. Liu's grandson was only thirteen years old when these criminals were captured. Ms. Liu was

said to have been a local hegemon for three decades. We have no supplementary information about her and her two sons' age. It might be reasonable to suspect that Ms. Liu was in her sixties or seventies, as the judge considered her old age in the final sentence, which means that she started her life of crime from her thirties or forties. At that time her sons would have been too young to be criminal leaders. No other Guan family members are mentioned in the judgment. Ms. Liu and her two sons constituted a typical nuclear family, and did not rely on other Guan relatives. It seems reasonable to assume that Ms. Liu devised this project in her middle age, and the two sons lived in the shadow of her authority and followed her directions on how to establish their dominance over the local community.

Like those women who participated in the construction of local public projects as the previous chapter shows, Ms. Liu presented her unusual capabilities in the sphere outside the *jia*. However, in contrast to the female contemporaries who became local celebrities through visible and applaudable activities, she earned a notorious reputation in a destructive way in the judgment of elite males. Liang Gengyao divides Song local elite into two groups—respectful seniors and malevolent strongmen corresponding to their positive and negative images in local community.²⁵ Such a categorization, although based on the analysis and generalization of elite men's involvement in local affairs, seems applicable to a number of women in spite of their lack of public power and legitimate authority in the sphere outside the *jia*.

Judge Liu did not explain why Ms. Liu and her sons became such powerful figures in Shunchang. As Hugh Clark's study of a Fujian local community shows, "elite standing was permeable as new families of undistinguished background found footholds through the accumulation of wealth and access to the imperial examinations."²⁶ Under this structure, the future of the *jia* considerably relied on women, who were crucial property managers as well as preliminary tutors and lifelong supervisors of sons in many households. The pressure and recognition that women received from male relatives motivated them to develop various strategies in becoming responsible bursars and educators for the sake of the *jia*.²⁷ Ms. Liu seemed to be an insightful woman who was acquainted with these crucial ways to upward social mobility, although her schemes proved extremely unusual among contemporaries. Her three-decade supremacy in the locality suggests that either Ms. Liu inherited a large dowry from her parents or her husband left her much wealth, which became her primary resource to develop her nuclear family's local influence. She must

also have paid attention to her sons' education. When her second son grew up, she bought him an official title, which added to the family's political and cultural capital.

No doubt there existed other such influential families in the same local community. Generally speaking, these families' strategy was to cooperate with local government or to resist it only tacitly and behind the scenes, and thus to enjoy reciprocal benefits.²⁸ In contrast, Ms. Liu and her sons displayed their ambition straightforwardly and out in the open. They employed political, economic, and cultural resources to gradually appropriate the local government's authority in Shunchang. They were fairly familiar with local government's standard tasks and endeavored, in effect, to establish a local administrative authority apart from the existing local government. They functioned in the way that the local government exactly did—they built prisons, adjudicated local people's conflicts, hired private guards, smuggled salt, and collected commercial tax. Judge Liu complained that "for three decades, (Shunchang) people only knew the Guan family's power, and did not know there was a local government. When people encountered conflicts, they did not dare to report to the government, but invariably obeyed the Guan family's directions."²⁹ Their actions threatened the local government's legitimate authority, and the violence and severity of their methods jeopardized local social order. In effect they created a shadow local government through their organized crime activities.³⁰

Judge Liu did not record how Ms. Liu and her two sons accomplished various projects respectively. Therefore it is hard to know the exact ways in which Ms. Liu participated in outer affairs. Nevertheless, the facts that Shunchang's local people all knew Ms. Liu's name and the local magistrate placed her in the leading role among the principle criminals suggest that she could not have been a woman supervising the sons' actions from behind the scenes. She was such an aggressive figure that she must have personally managed and attended some of their enterprises in the outer sphere, especially when she was still a young widow and her sons were immature. It is not clear why no members of her husband's lineage appeared in this legal case. The only relative involved in the case was Yang Shiyi 楊十一, the younger brother of Ms. Liu's younger daughter-in-law, who joined the criminals through marriage. The other accessories in this case were connected with the principals simply through their economic network. Ms. Liu's unchallenged control of family resources ensured her supreme authority in their criminal organization.

While Ms. Liu's second son was in an official post in the neighboring circuit, she herself was playing a criminal version of local officials' role in the local community with her first son and grandson. Although a woman's overt takeover of local administrative responsibilities obviously upset the ideal gender structure, the judge did not comment on the gender-violating aspect in Ms. Liu's case. The reason that she was taken into custody was that her unconcealed disregard for and appropriation of governmental authority and legitimacy in the public field imperiled the existing social order and endangered the government. Her vast criminal dealings, rather than the fact that she was a woman out of the house, irritated the officials and gentlemen. Elite men, even those who might recognize a negotiable inner/outer boundary, would not accept her behavior, as the highest priority was always given to stable social and public order instead of the maintenance of gender roles.

Song Fujian women's participation in local administration varied from providing official husbands and sons with moral admonishment and practical advice, seeking official positions for male descendants, to ruling over local residents. Some of them limited their communication with office-holding relatives inside the *jia*, while some others employed the privilege and resources of their *jia* to pursue public interest for their male family members. The former's interference in administrative matters was interpreted and eulogized by elite men as family affairs; while the latter's direct intervention was not questioned as long as they did not harm the bureaucratic or social order. Elite men usually did not oppose their female relatives' involvement in government administration out of their respect for these women's domestic authority. It might have led to their generally tolerant attitudes toward non-relative women who behaved in similar ways, and thus have offered women a relatively benign atmosphere to display their agency in the public domain.

Women and Governmental Structures

A great deal of sources presented women's involvement in outer affairs as something that originated from their concern for their *jia* and male family members. This framing of women's motivations for intervening in the public sphere made it possible for their male official relatives to hold them up as exemplars, either in order to elevate their own families' status or in order to encourage moral and ethical cultivation in the localities under their administration. One way in which this might find expression was the titling of government buildings with gendered labels.

I have discussed gendered house structure labels in private residences in the first chapter. However, in the context of public government buildings such gendered labels need to be reinterpreted.

In Fujian local gazetteers there are plentiful texts recording how filial sons entertained their mothers within government house structures. For example, when Wu Yu 吳與 was the official administrator of Huai An County 懷安, his mother, Ms. Wang, stayed in the governmental building with him. Knowing that his mother was busy with weaving all day, "Wu Yu built pavilions and houses, and planted flowers and fruits in the governmental building to amuse her."³¹ Fu Zide 傅自得 (1116–1183) moved to Fujian with his mother during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition. When he took a post at Zhang 漳, "there were ponds and pavilions in the governmental building. One day, while he accompanied his mother there, dozens of colorful rare birds suddenly came and rested over the pond. His mother loved these birds very much. . . . On the next day, he accompanied his mother to the pond again, and found that the birds came back. They continuously stayed there until Zide left [Zhang]."³² Wu Yu and Fu Zide both lived in governmental buildings with their mothers when they were posted away from home. Generally speaking, in a governmental building, offices were located in the outer quarters, while officers and their family members' *jia* were hidden in the inner quarter, probably behind the middle gate, to indicate the segregation of public and private fields. However, the public/private issue in this context was rather ambiguous since this private place was always surrounded by and a part of the public region. An officer could employ public resources to build pavilions and ponds or take advantage of existent public facilities to entertain his mother, which made the situation more complicated than in a purely private *jia* house. Spending government financial, material and labor resources on personal or family relatives' affairs was not uncommon among Song officials, but it was usually viewed to be illegitimate and corrupt and thus was conducted secretly to avoid getting in trouble. Ostensibly, the purpose of building or renovating government structures to entertain mothers was for the sake of gratifying these local administrators' personal desires. However, the show of filial piety justified such activities, and made them well accepted, emulated and eulogized.

Most local gazetteers referred to government buildings with gendered labels only in passing. However, a few records have fortunately survived and offered us exhaustive details about the construction of such structures and the Song elite's interpretation of their cultural signifi-

cance. For example, in Lianjiang County 連江 of Fuzhou, there was a “hall celebrating a mother’s pleasure (*ci qing tang* 慈慶堂)” in the city hall, which is recorded in a comprehensive essay written by Yang Pu 楊濮. It was originally an office in the governmental building, but had gradually deteriorated as time went on. In 1160, Ye Yi 葉猗 became the county’s local administrator. He noticed the decaying building, and said with a sigh, “gentlemen should repair their dwellings every day. I cannot treat the governmental building as a posthouse, or let it be as shabby and simple as it is now without any reflection.” Therefore Ye supervised the building’s renovation into a new hall with wonderful views. From the windows people could see faraway lakes and mountains, expansive fields, and working peasants.

The day when this renovation project was completed was exactly Ye Yi’s mother’s birthday. Ye Yi led his children and younger brothers to toast his mother and celebrate her birthday in the hall. Local people viewed the scene and acclaimed it as a rare great event. In any case, was this hall established simply for sightseeing alone? I [Yang Pu] know that the way of filial piety can be observed so as to influence audiences positively. I hoped this hall might be entitled “*ci qing* 慈慶.” Is this not fine? In the past, Feng Kang 馮伉 wrote fourteen articles of admonition when he took a post at Liquan 醴泉.³³ He disseminated his work to every county under his administration. These articles were mainly used to teach commoners loyalty and filial piety. Alas! Feng Kang’s intention was good. But Ye Yi is much greater, as empty words are less effective in persuasion than personal conduct. Even Feng Kang’s work was praised by later generations. How can [I let] Ye Yi’s merit be forgotten because no record is preserved?³⁴

This *ci qing tang* was located in Lianjiang’s county hall. It initially existed as a public office. After Ye Yi’s renovation, it was transformed into a hall (*tang* 堂) in physical structure. However, a modification of appearance would not by itself have altered its fundamental function as a governmental office. Judging by the fact that the hall was surrounded by commoners on the day of Ye Yi’s mother’s birthday, it was still a public site accessible by the populace, but not a woman’s private place hidden in the inner quarter.³⁵ The hall was not a special house structure built to entertain Ye Yi’s mother, but an ideal spot for her birthday party and

a fine new site to enjoy pleasing views of the scenic landscape.

For the mother, the banquet provided an extraordinary opportunity to enter governmental public space in an open way and be welcomed by the elite men normally dominating this arena (as well as by a broader populace). As for Ye Yi himself, the magnificent new hall completed under his supervision and the grand feast he held at this specific site displayed both his outstanding administrative capacity as a local administrator and his moral achievement as a filial son. Of course Ye Yi's accomplishments in the public and private fields were simultaneously witnessed and recognized by the assembled civilians and by elite guests like Yang Pu. The protagonist of this birthday party in Yang Pu's essay was not Ye Yi's mother, but Ye Yi. In Yang Pu's view, for an official who was responsible for local people's moral education, real acts were more remarkable and effective than oral or textual instruction. Thus he praised Ye Yi for practicing his filial piety by performing his mother's birthday celebration at a new official site under commoners' gaze. He interpreted this banquet as the local administrator's positive contribution to the moral education of the local community. He realized that the birthday event itself was occasional and transient. With the intention of pleasing Ye Yi, he proposed the *ci qing* title for the new hall to remind local people of this event, to propagate Ye Yi's filial behavior, and to perpetuate his fame. Filial piety was a fundamental ethical virtue rooted in the *jia* and at the same time an essential part of Confucian political philosophy. Local administrators could introduce it outside the *jia* and display it in public space as an example for civilians to follow in their own *jia*. The motif of filial piety connected private/family matters to the discourse of public affairs, making the boundary between the *jia* and outside the *jia* elastic and subject to interpretations. *Ci qing* was obviously a gendered title representing family ethics. Yet it appeared as an honorary label for an official structure, which demonstrates that in this case the boundary between public/private and *jia*/government was obscured. And it is this ambiguity and flexibility that gave women power outside the *jia*.

Women and Lawsuits

Most Song Fujian women were commoners without official family background. They did not enjoy access to the superior human resources and social networks that women from official families occupied, and thus were not empowered to influence local governments' regular administration. The deficiency of available official channels restricted the ways these

female commoners could communicate with local governments. However, since in reality most Song women did not live a completely segregated life, their participation in local affairs and contact with local governments appear to have been unavoidable. Song women's concerns for themselves, the *jia*, and local communities overlapped with local governments' official responsibilities. As a result, they entered into all kinds of relationships with local governments. On the one hand, female commoners might seek aid from local officials, or cooperate with them when they were engaged in local welfare. On the other hand, local governments might be obliged to deal with conflicts involving female characters, to undertake public projects benefiting both male and female, or to propagate and make use of positive images of women's domesticity for public interest.

The most frequent contact between Song Fujian women and local governments was through legal cases. Song elite and official opinion generally viewed a number of districts in south China as particularly litigious regions, among which Fujian was usually addressed. Local officials here were said to be quite busy with dealing with abundant lawsuits.³⁶ Official history and anecdote writers attributed this condition to the severe imbalance between the shortage of farmland and skyrocketing population in Fujian.³⁷ And modern scholars generally explain it by investigating the development of local economic market, prevalence of land trading, increase of population, and flow of immigrants from the North.³⁸ In the surviving legal cases in Song Fujian, civil lawsuits significantly outnumber criminal ones, and include a great deal of conflicts over household property, especially land. Women, due to their substantial property rights and operation of family business, were thus deeply involved. The *Ming-gong shupan qingmingji* contains many Fujian cases in which women and their husbands' patrilineal kin could not agree about the ownership of certain household property, and pursued the local governments' arbitration at court. Women played the role of either plaintiffs or defendants. I will not reiterate any such cases here since the primary sources about women's struggles for household property have been repeatedly elaborated by scholars studying Song women's property rights.³⁹ Bettine Birge, for example, contextualizes her study of "many disputes over land and the importance of women's inheritance of it" in the prefecture of Jian-ning,⁴⁰ and has convinced us women's unprecedented property rights in the Song were ensured by the government law and protected by local officials in general.

The extant Song documents preserve a large number of women-related legal cases that local administrators dealt with. However, local

governments, which were supposed to promote idealized images of segregated women, were prudent about whether women should be brought to official halls—thus encountering the public directly and visibly—during lawsuits. In many published Song-Yuan official admonitions (*guan zhen* 官箴), experienced official authors warned colleagues not to involve women in legal conflicts indiscreetly.⁴¹ In the *Zhouxian tigang* 州縣提綱, whose author was probably a Fujianese Chen Xiang 陳襄 (1017–1080), one chapter was devoted to preaching that governments should not involve too many people, especially women, in lawsuits.⁴²

[Some plaintiffs] fight with someone's husband and involve the wife to bring a false charge against the husband. [Some plaintiffs] fight with somebody's father and ask his daughter to be a witness. They intend to involve more people and humiliate women, and view these as their victory. . . . As for other cases, such as fights over marriage lands, seeking out those who are most closely related is enough. Do not seek out women who are not most closely related [to the case].⁴³

Li Yuanbi's 李元弼 *Zuoyi zizhen* 作邑自箴 and Hu Taichu's 胡太初 *Zhoulian xulun* 晝簾緒論 preserve similar statements.⁴⁴ The third chapter of the *Zuoyi zizhen* is "Managing state affairs," in which Li Yuanbi remarks that "all plaintiffs who argue that defendants' parents, wives and daughters and so on should be summoned as witnesses actually intend to do them harm (through the summons). [Local officials] should consider [such problems] carefully. Do not seek out [all the witnesses that plaintiffs request] without discrimination."⁴⁵ Hu Taichu also presents his attitude toward lawsuits involving women:

When a plaintiff launches a lawsuit against a defendant, he invariably involves the defendant's father, sons, brothers, and even unrelated families in his indictment. If the plaintiff has an old grudge with the defendant, he will also treat the defendant's wife and daughter as witnesses. His thought is that as right or wrong has not yet been decided, he can [use the government to] disturb the defendant's family through seeking out [witnesses], waste the defendant's money and property, or humiliate his wife and daughter. This habit must not be promoted. A local magistrate should investigate how severe the case is and seek out only the one or two most closely

related witnesses. If the witnesses are women, the magistrate should not seek them out immediately.⁴⁶

The above three authors drew upon their professional experiences and offered contemporary bureaucrats practical suggestions on dealing with legal issues. They seem to have been fairly prudent about involving female witnesses in lawsuits, and all suggested local officials to be cautious and considerate, and not to call on female witnesses unless their presence was really necessary. But their admonitions to others give us reason to believe that other officials in the same position did not restrain themselves in this way. Their arguments against summoning women to the official court indicate that on the one hand Song women were prone to be implicated in lawsuits when their male relatives were formally charged, while on the other hand summoning female witnesses and requiring them to be present in the public court was viewed as a humiliation for women. As for female witnesses, once they were involved in a lawsuit they had to leave their familiar dwellings and lost the protection of the inner quarters. They were then relegated to an inferior position in confrontation with state authority, and were obliged to expose themselves to an unknown public. The harm that female witnesses might experience was identified as “*ling ru* 凌辱/陵辱” in both the *Zhouxian tigang* and *Zhoulian xulun*. *Ling ru* could mean either physical or psychological injury or damage, but in the context of these two documents, it denotes psychological humiliation specifically. All three pointed out that plaintiffs would like to involve defendants’ female relatives in lawsuits. One must conclude that this was a normal phenomenon occurring frequently in local judicial processes during the Song-Yuan period; otherwise, this issue would not come to the fore in all the three manuals.

The motive behind such a common practice was explained by the local officials as the plaintiffs’ malicious manipulation of judicial authority to disturb the gender order in the defendants’ *jia* by humiliating the defendants’ female relatives in public. Although the inner quarters might appear to be inaccessible to intervention by outsiders, they were vulnerable to local governments’ legitimate reach. Involving women in law cases for which their presence was not necessarily essential seemed to be a common tactic of Song plaintiffs, as the government admonitions suggest. The authors of the *Zhouxian tigang* and *Zhoulian xulun* warned that involving a defendant’s family members including female relatives in lawsuits without discrimination would disrupt his *jia* and even ruin the

family before the judge inquired into the case.⁴⁷ But in reality plaintiffs took advantage of the governments' legitimate power to break forcibly the boundary between inner and outer and potentially place the defendants' *jia* in turmoil through involving their female relatives.

When women participated in legal cases as plaintiffs or defendants themselves, their presence at government courts was presumably unavoidable. Female plaintiffs voluntarily initiated lawsuits to avail themselves of government authority to protect their own or their family members' legal rights, whereas female defendants were of course obliged to be taken out of the inner quarters and confront government directly. Many local documents of Fujian record female plaintiffs' and defendants' participation in either civil or criminal cases. Although the number of female plaintiffs was fewer than that of male, their existence garnered more attention and controversy. Generally speaking, women were not encouraged to go to court, and one may presume that without strong reasons Song women themselves would not have preferred to face public pressure outside of the inner quarters. Thus when we read cases in which women are prominent as plaintiffs, we may assume that the female protagonists must have strongly felt the necessity and urgency of inducing government authority to protect their or their close relatives' interests. Among Song Fujian's "exemplary women," there was a daughter from the Gutian 古田 Li 利 family who vowed to avenge a crime, found the criminal, went to the local government for help, and finally had the criminal caught.

The father [of the Li family] died. [The daughter] had no brothers and lived with her mother alone. The Li family was wealthy. The cousin of the daughter, [Li] Gongqian 公謙, killed the mother one night, and carried all the family property away. The daughter hid herself and escaped the murder. She swore to take revenge on the cousin. Thus she had her head shaved, became a nun, and traveled around looking for the cousin. One day she found the cousin in Chuzhou 處州. At that time Gongqian was playing football and did not notice her. The daughter went to the prefectural government and charged him. The government caught him. The prefect was moved by her filial piety, so he sent [Gongqian] to the daughter's hometown under escort and had him sentenced there.⁴⁸

The Li daughter appears to have been a brilliant and brave character. Determined to take revenge on the cousin who killed her mother

and robbed her family wealth, she seems not to have believed in the local government's capability to handle such a time-consuming and expensive matter. She decided to look for the criminal by herself. Presumably because her female identity might bring her inconvenience on the road, she chose to become a nun, as such a religious identity at once removed her from the restriction of the *jia* and ideological gender segregation. She moved freely in the outer sphere with her new identity, and must have made contact with many strangers, so that she finally found her cousin in a prefecture far away from her hometown. The fact that her cousin was playing ball on the street when she found him suggests that he felt safe enough to appear in public in Chuzhou, presumably thinking he had already run far enough to escape the Gutian government's chase. His conduct tends to confirm the daughter's implied doubt in the local government's ability to deal with such a case. Yet although the daughter found the criminal through her personal endeavor, she did not retaliate personally, but immediately went to the local government for help. She presumed that the local government was responsible for justice and thus could mete out a formal and legal punishment to realize her revenge.

As the case of the Li daughter shows, in addition to the many sources that record Song Fujian women's involvement in civil lawsuits and attract the attention of most scholars who study women and law, there are a few examples of criminal cases in which women appeared as plaintiffs or defendants. The Li daughter was a direct victim of her cousin's crime of murder and robbery, and thus was fully qualified to charge him in court. Some women instead were treated as suspects and forced to leave the inner quarters and appear at court. The inner/outer boundary collapsed automatically and no longer protected a woman residing inside the *jia* once she violated state laws. For example, a Quanzhou 泉州 local gazetteer records how a Southern Song local official, Zhao Zixiao 趙子瀟, identified a woman as the criminal in a lawsuit. When Zhao was in the post of local magistrate in Quanzhou, a young woman's father went to the court accusing a clerk of kidnapping the woman and making her his concubine. Actually, the clerk's wife was jealous. She had already killed the concubine, put the corpse in a big jar, and sent the jar to her elder brother's office in Xinghua 興化 before the concubine's father launched the lawsuit. As the Quanzhou government could not find the concubine, the local officials could not deal with the father's lawsuit. Zhao Zixiao investigated the fact, and sent someone to Xinghua to secretly look for the concubine's corpse. The jar was finally excavated, and the wife was put into prison.⁴⁹ Given that the original plaintiff was

the concubine's father and that the defendant was the clerk, the clerk's wife could normally function as a witness at most. If the judicial officials in the case followed the advice of our three manual writers, she could stay in the inner quarter safely because they would be cautious about calling a woman as a witness. However, once the facts were revealed, she was no longer able to stay inside undisturbed by the outer world. She was accused of murder, deprived of legitimate protection, taken out of her *jia* violently, detained in the government jail, and compelled to accept public sentencing.

Apart from those women who sought compensation or revenge through formal lawsuits, others might voluntarily pursue administrative support from local government and thus protect their legal rights and interests in advance. A text in a Putian County 莆田 gazetteer introducing the achievements of Liu Ruzhou 劉汝舟 as a legal officer of Xinghua 興化 mentions such a lady. A rich person surnamed Wang in the county died and did not leave any children. A clerk reported his household as a "cut-off household" (*hu jue* 戶絕),⁵⁰ and the government investigated and assessed his house property at the value of 300,000 *qian* and planned to confiscate it. His widow went to the local magistrate and declared that she was pregnant with a posthumous child. The local magistrate did not believe her, but Liu Ruzhou insisted that Wang family's property should not be confiscated. Later the wife gave birth to a boy. Liu Ruzhou argued with the local magistrate and helped the wife claim the household property, which irritated the local magistrate. Ruzhou submitted his certificate of official appointment, and requested to return home. The local magistrate somewhat calmed down, but still confiscated half the property.⁵¹ Local officials' varied attitudes toward a "cut-off household" case in this story support Bettine Birge's discovery that "members of the Sung bureaucracy were of mixed opinion about appropriating private lands" and debated about the issue of how to treat *hu jue* property.⁵²

This case actually was not a standard lawsuit but an appeal of a completed or pending administrative decision. Neither Wang's widow nor the local officials formally identified themselves as either a plaintiff or defendant. Their contact and conflict originated from their desires for the same property. The local magistrate decided to register the Wang family as a childless household so that the government could legally confiscate the property and increase tax income. Wang's widow wanted to maintain the house property for her own benefit and that of her unborn child. She must have been fully aware of the government's authority

in the matter of her nuclear family's private property. She may also have known, though, that if she was truly pregnant then the law, as opposed to this particular magistrate, was on her side. She may have had some male relatives who could work as her intermediaries with the local government. Nevertheless, as a protagonist whose interests were directly affected by the result of the case, her personal presence and argument at the local court must have carried more weight than that of male relatives unconnected to this specific event. It took courage on her part to publicly testify that she was pregnant, especially in the suspicious circumstance of a posthumous pregnancy. She went to the local magistrate, explained her situation, and pleaded for his reconsideration of his original plan. The consideration of gender segregation was subordinate to the woman's awareness of her practical need.

This female complainant appears to have been powerless in confrontation with the local government's superior authority. In spite of the efforts of a sympathetic official, Liu Ruzhou, Wang's widow still had to submit half the property to the local government. For women residing in the local community, even commoners or maids of less power inside the *jia*, it may well have been common sense that local government could function as an outside authority assisting women in solving problems related to their *jia*.⁵³ Whether a case was categorized as a criminal or not, gender discrimination was not formally allowed once women arrived at a local court and requested for help. However, the extent to which a local government would aid those women was still subjected to officials' various considerations.

Besides property matters, women appeared at a local court for a number of domestic issues. Patricia Ebrey's investigation of women, marriage and law in the Song has shown that government officials punished women who conducted adultery and incest and dealt with requests for divorce.⁵⁴ In the former two sorts of cases, women were presented as either licentious criminals or vulnerable victims. While for the latter, women were legally not allowed to initiate divorce.⁵⁵ It may lead us to presume Song women's disadvantageous and inferior position in marriage-related lawsuit, which was sometimes true but one aspect of a more complicated picture. The local sources of Fujian inform us women could also appeal to local government for support when they were not able to solve certain family problems. For example, one day in early Southern Song period, a widow, Ms. Yuan 袁氏, came to the court of Wang Yang 王洋, a local magistrate of Shaowu 邵武 who was said to be talented and good at governance. She submitted a petition begging the government

to allow her to remarry. Wang Yang noticed that a bit of red skirt was visible under her mourning dress and that she did not show any sign of sadness, so he ordered the clerks to conduct an inquiry with instruments of torture. She immediately admitted that she had poisoned her husband.⁵⁶ The event was thus transformed from a normal family conflict to a criminal case because of the magistrate's alert observation. At the outset, the widow went to court to request the government's permission for her remarriage, which very likely had encountered strong resistance from her dead husband's family although the source does not mention them at all. No matter the reason for their opposition, Ms. Yuan must not have felt powerful enough to defy their refusal, which urged her to pursue effective external assistance.

Requesting the local government to resolve inner-*jia* conflicts cannot have been Ms. Yuan's invention, and her preparation of a petition proved that she knew the formal procedure well.⁵⁷ Her going to court showed that she clearly understood that the local government possessed legitimate authority to issue her a certain document, which would empower her to ignore her in-laws' opposition.⁵⁸ Song women could expect to obtain governmental support while confronting inner-*jia* conflicts. In the aforementioned manual of admonitions for officials, *Zhouxian tigang*, women's requests to a court for remarriage are also formally discussed. In Volume 2, in a paragraph entitled "do not sentence immediately after receiving petitions," it is stated that if an official receives an appeal for remarriage he must summon the woman and inquire into relevant facts.⁵⁹ According to this manual by an experienced local administrator, a qualified local official should not only accept a remarriage appeal from a woman, but also investigate its circumstances personally. This form of evidence strongly suggests that there were many women like Ms. Yuan (though presumably unlike her in not being murderers) who appeared at local courts requesting the government's assistance against opposition from their husbands' relatives.

Taking all the above cases into account, we can see that local governments served the interests of women in terms of administrative and judicial functions even though a prominent strand of administrative belief and practice aimed at avoiding women's appearance in public space. The attitudes of office-holding manual writers toward women in the inner quarters conformed to the orthodox principal of gender segregation, and they viewed women's presence at court as a humiliation to their *jia*. It is reasonable to assume that a significant number of local officials would have taken such advice to heart and made efforts to

prevent the unnecessary involvement of women in legal cases—though we can also assume that many other officials made no such effort, or the manual writers would have had not offered the advice. In any case, even if local governments took a minimizing approach, individual women could participate in criminal cases or civil lawsuits as protagonists or victims. Also, they could submit petitions asking for government support when confronting relatives' pressure about inner-*jia* affairs that implicated their legal rights. Local governments were legally obliged to receive these women and deal with their appeals, following formal legal or administrative procedures regardless of local officials' personal standpoint.⁶⁰ Through a variety of channels, Song women had much more frequent contact with the local government, especially in its judicial function, than the ideal of gender segregation might lead one to expect.

Women Under the Administration of Local Governments

In addition to face-to-face contacts in legal cases, administrative responsibilities might lead local officials to interfere in the lives of women in certain plights even if they did not request assistance. One major duty of local governments was ruling over the population on official registers. Although ideally assumed to stay inside the *jia*, women were also treated as one half of the country's base as men were. Therefore, when junior girls or adult women were abducted, or newborn females threatened by infanticide, local officials were obliged to exert administrative authority to protect them and maintain stability for the local population.

In comparison to men, women were more vulnerable to various dangers in the public space; one major threat was abduction. Although both male and female might get abducted, women appeared more frequently as targets.⁶¹ It rendered the state anxious and severe punishments of such crimes were visible in many Song imperial edicts and laws.⁶² Moreover, preventing the abnormal relocation of local residents, especially females, was always a principal concern of local governments. Recent scholars' research shows the records of the abduction of Song women concentrate in a number of underdeveloped districts.⁶³ However, this general assumption interestingly did not apply to Fujian. Wen Yi 溫益, a local magistrate of Fuzhou, issued an order warning local people of the risk of abduction in the year 1099.

I have heard that many visitors from Jianzhou 建州, Jianzhou 劍州, and Shaowu command 邵武軍 come to the territory

of Fuzhou, and use money and goods to bribe brokers . . . to abduct women and maidservants from [Fuzhou] families. They say that they want to marry these women or adopt them as children. Thus they abduct the women and place them in rural families for several days. Then they take the women to various places for sale, making a handsome profit, causing the women's families to go to court and be involved in unsolvable lawsuits. It is hard to find these women, and their parents or husbands no longer get to see them. As for the women themselves, people do not know whether they are still alive or not. How unreasonable this is!⁶⁴

Based on this document, we know that some noticeable number of Fuzhou women found themselves lured or kidnapped out of the *jia* and sold to alien districts because of their or their family members' desires for wealth. As the administrative center of the Fujian Circuit, Fuzhou was economically and culturally more advanced than Jianzhou, Nanjianzhou, and Shaowu Command. The unusual flow of abducted women from the coast areas to the inland lasted throughout the Song period.⁶⁵ In the 1170s, the prefect of Fuzhou, Shi Hao 史浩 (1106–1194), submitted a memorial to Emperor Xiaozong. According to his observation, "Impoverished families in the Prefecture of Jianning (Jianzhou), Nanjianzhou, Tingzhou, and Shaowu Command do not raise children. . . . Wealthy families do not have servants or maids (*nubi* 奴婢), and have to purchase from other prefectures. The price is high, and people are thus increasingly engaged in trading and kidnapping."⁶⁶ The substantial demand for female laborers resulted in frequent illegal transport and trafficking in women. The repeated crimes severely jeopardized the victims' life security, caused abundant family tragedies, and threatened the population base of the local administration. The victims' family members went to the local government for help; however, the government was not capable of finding the victims. Therefore Wen Yi's order was enacted to notify the local people of the possible danger.

People should exert great caution about it. I issued an order, and set up a stele [with the order inscribed on it] to inform local people. My edict requires every five persons to constitute a *bao* 保 group. The *bao* group will reward people with contributions in accordance with current decrees. In addition, for each criminal under arrest, the middlemen involved and any

people who hide the victims should pay the fine of twenty *guan* 貫 as an extra grant [to those receiving rewards]. These accessories' neighbors and the leaders in their local communities should also be strictly punished.⁶⁷

In order to prevent such acts and to catch the criminals, the local government had to rely on the *bao*, which were military and security cooperatives formed by locals. Residents in the same local unit were required to supervise each other, as they might be implicated in the crimes if their neighbors were found guilty. In all these abduction cases, the victims were exclusively women who normally stayed inside the *jia*. When they were beguiled or forced outside or concealed in strangers' houses, they might encounter people residing in the neighborhood. Therefore, it is reasonable for the local government to assume that the victims' or criminals' neighbors should be the first to notice the abduction, and thus to assign the people in local security units to the task of overseeing neighbors and reporting their discoveries. Of course, the precondition for the local government's proposal to be feasible was that the local people could identify their female neighbors. The local government's decision is suggestive of a social reality acknowledged by Song local government—Song Fujian women were not completely restricted to the inner quarters. Wen Yi's strategy did not come out of blue; it was the application of the *baojia* 保甲 system at the local level. In 1070, When the prime minister Wang Anshi proposed it to Emperor Shenzong, he already indicated its function in preventing abduction.⁶⁸ There was a nationwide presumption that women, in everyday life, must have had contact with people outside their *jia*, at least those dwelling in their neighborhood. Wen Yi's strategy must have taken into effect, to some extent, in Fuzhou. More than seventy years later, Shi Hao noticed that kidnappers were "detained and beaten, and fierce criminals were mostly exiled." However, "the custom [of abducting women] did not end" in his time.⁶⁹ The abduction of Song women satisfied the demand of the thriving market in women, which partially destabilized the state and local government in exerting their theoretically unchallenged authority over the female population that they ruled.

Other than the abduction of female adults, infanticide was another issue that local governments were obliged to attend to. In contrast to victims who could express their will and influence their own treatment, newborns were entirely subordinated to their parents' disposition. Thus local governments' interference might appear even more necessary in

cases where girls were threatened by infanticide than in the cases of abduction above. As many social historians have pointed out, infanticide, especially of girls, was a serious problem in Song Fujian.⁷⁰ In one Yanping 延平 local gazetteer, it is stated that “during the Song period, Fujian people would like to have four sons at most. The male newborns beyond that were all killed as the family could not support them financially. If they gave birth to girls, three was the limit. Usually the utensil filled with water was prepared while the mother was delivering, and the baby was immediately drowned once it was born. The act was called ‘washing children’ (*xi er* 洗兒) and was especially popular in Jianzhou 建州 and Jianzhou 劍州.”⁷¹ The decision for infanticide, according to this source, generally originated from the family’s sense of economic limits.⁷² Both male and female infants were threatened by infanticide in Fujian’s families during the Song period, though females were more likely targets than males as the text suggests.⁷³

It is hard to tell the extent to which men and women were involved in making such a decision respectively in the *jia*. Some Fujian officials blamed newborns’ fathers and brothers for infanticide,⁷⁴ while the Song law punished all the people who presumably knew or conducted infanticide, including parents, neighbors who served in the same *bao* group, and midwives.⁷⁵ The source above encourages us to believe that the decision of infanticide was often made before or immediately upon birth. If we place infanticide in the context of the exact moment at which birth took place, it happened in a segregated delivery room, which at that moment was exclusively occupied by women and entirely prohibited outsiders’ intrusion. And the practitioners were usually midwives, maidservants, or other women of the same family. The essay “Admonition Against Infanticide,” composed by Zhu Song 朱松 (1097–1143), Zhu Xi’s father, provides an example demonstrating women’s agency in practicing infanticide.⁷⁶

According to Zhu Song’s narrative, in 1117 he interviewed a certain Ms. Yu, who recalled that she was wrongly taken to the underworld and witnessed the underground officials’ interrogation of a woman who killed five of her newborn children. Ms. Yu was finally sent back by the underworld officials, who ordered her to “tell relatives and people in the village not to kill infants.”⁷⁷ In Ms. Yu’s imagination, the woman she saw was the infant murderer, while she herself was the moral crusader ordained to discourage people in the local community from killing infants. The story implies the roles women played in infanticide and anti-infanticide that Ms. Yu assumed and very likely reflects that in

social reality.⁷⁸ To carry out her task of persuading people not to kill infants, Ms. Yu informed Zhu Song, a local elite man, of her experience, whereas Zhu Song targeted his essay at a broader audience with the same intention. As a local administrator, Zhu Song manipulated a local woman's story to solve the problem of infanticide and hoped later people would credit him with saving children's life. Nevertheless, as an interviewer and recorder, he must have noticed and recognized women's key roles in promoting or stopping the practice of infanticide that Ms. Yu claimed in her narrative.

Although the Song state promulgated legal statutes against infanticide, the prohibitions seemed to be ignored in many districts, which led some local officials like Zhu Song to resort to the solution of moral persuasion.⁷⁹ It was difficult and in some cases even impracticable to exert central government's political authority on individual households in terms of infanticide, an inner-*jia* affair. Yet the state found the means to insert its wishes into the one inner space, the birth chamber, which was dominated by women in theory and in practice. In 1169, because of officials' reports on Fujian's problem of infanticide, the central government announced an edict that if a child was born in a poor Fujian family, the family made a report [of the birth] to the local government. "After the local officials had confirmed the fact [of the birth], the local government would give the family one *shi* of rice and one *guan* of coins to help the family raise the child."⁸⁰ Later, in 1195, the state even agreed to use land taxes in Jianzhou 建州, Jianzhou 劍州, Tingzhou 汀州, and Shanwu Command 邵武軍 to aid poor families in raising children.⁸¹ The repeated decrees by the central government indicate that the state did truly care about its population base⁸² and made efforts to employ state resources to stop the practice of infanticide in Fujian's localities.⁸³

Families chose infanticide mostly for reasons of household finances, and thus the local officials attempted to solve the problem mainly through economic methods, which meant they had to rely on state revenue. They reported the problem to the central government and gained the state edicts that authorized them to make use of state property. The administrative authorities attempted to take advantage of economic resources to influence the concealed practices in the inner quarters. The economic relief guaranteed by administrative decrees provided the local people with alternative choices other than infanticide. It neither overrode family members' authority in deciding a baby's fate nor challenged women's autonomy in the practice of infanticide inside the *jia*. Local officials pragmatically recognized family members' ultimate authority in

handling this inner-*jia* issue, in spite of their deep concern with the state's population base and strong willingness to use superior resources to influence the behavior of local families.

Local officials could request the central government's financial support, but had to rely on themselves to stop such practices in their administrative districts. They functioned as significant bridges connecting the state with male and female local residents, and influenced them in managing the inner-*jia* affairs without coercion. One example was Shunchang County's 順昌 local magistrate, Yu Wei 俞偉.

He wrote an essay entitled "Prohibitions on Infanticide." He invited those seniors with high prestige in the local community to the county hall, and had them sit along the corridor. He used his salary to buy alcohol, filled their cups and toasted personally. Then, he took out his essay, asking them to persuade local people not to kill newborns. Thousands of children survived in the subsequent years [because of his work]. . . . The Assistant Fiscal Commissioner (*Zhuanyun panguan* 轉運判官), Cao Fu 曹輔, reported this affair to the central government. The central court praised him, reappointed him to the same post, and even legislated to guarantee his policy to be carried out.⁸⁴

Yu Wei's strategy was simple but proved so successful that even the central government appreciated it. He did not draw upon the state's financial resources, but made the most of the local elders' influence in the community. He owed the method to his friend Yang Shi, a neo-Confucian who grew up in Shunchang and was familiar with the problem of infanticide in this region.⁸⁵ Unlike Zhu Song, the neo-Confucian in the former case, Yang Shi did not address women's agency in infanticide in his letter to Yu Wei. However, his advice on moral preaching rather than legal punishment reveals his respect for the relative independence of the domestic sphere occupied by women.

Yu Wei, a caring, compassionate and responsible local official as the text suggests, summoned local seniors to the county hall, cordially treated them, expressed his worry about the serious local infanticide problem, and requested their assistance. All these visible efforts of the local magistrate happened in the government's public space. What is missing from this text are the seniors' concrete activities once the banquet was over. The primary source does not provide us with any information about the

interactions between seniors and other commoners, but states that Yu Wei finally won the campaign and the result was exhilarating. It shows that the local government's manipulation of local power to influence local people's everyday life inside the *jia* was feasible and sometimes effective. Actually, the Fuzhou government's reliance on local communities in preventing women from being abducted has exemplified local governments' recognition of and intentional use of unofficial but practical local power. As victims and perpetrators, women were closely tied to the abduction or infanticide that either originated from or happened inside the *jia*. However, the power of local government and non-officials to interfere made them unable to live independently inside the inner quarters. Under certain circumstances, even without the local governments' direct intervention, women inside the *jia* were still subjected to neighbors' supervision and local seniors' authority as much as their male family members were.

Some officials like Yu Wei resorted to local powers to facilitate the application of state policies in the local *jias*, whereas some preferred contacting the local residents directly to offer aids. For example, Lin Guangyi 林光裔 from Fujian was assigned in 1219 to be the local magistrate of Ningdu 寧都.

It was a popular custom for people [in Ningdu] to drown newborn girls. Guangyi stored some rice and built a Children-Raising Granary (*ju zi cang* 舉子倉). He also accumulated some salary to form the "Children-Raising Fund (*ju zi qian* 舉子錢)." He asked local people to report to the government if their poor neighbors gave birth to girls. He first gave money and rice to lying-in women. One month later, [the fathers] could take their daughters to the government court. The government gave them three bushels (*dou* 斗) of rice each month after investigation until they were one year old. This was practiced for several years, and many girls survived because of it.⁸⁶

Lin Guangyi was a Fuzhou official who was serving in the Western Prefecture of Jiangnan at that time.⁸⁷ He also cared about the problem of infanticide, especially that of newborn girls. He used governmental financial resources to solve the problem, a usual way endorsed by the state in stopping infanticide. And in order to get timely and accurate information on female infant births in local households, he required local

people to submit the data on newborn girls in their neighborhood to the government. In this way, the officials could gain first-hand inner-*jia* information that was not included in official registers without entering the local *jias*. Food as well as subsidies could thus be distributed in time to women who had just delivered. After the girls reached one month old, they were carried to court and received government grants after the official investigation. The fact of a girl's delivery was a domestic event, but was treated as a public affair by the local government in its administrative campaign to stop infanticides.

In keeping with the general ideology of gender segregation, local governments' interference in people's inner-*jia* affairs was usually conditional and occasional, no matter what the category of woman or problem. Even when governments had to address themselves to problems within the *jia*, they usually sought to intervene through the mediation of communal power and information networks to influence inner-*jia* affairs from outside the *jia*. Furthermore the resources of local governments were limited in both material and personnel terms. Therefore local officials intentionally avoided directly intruding upon people's *jia* at least physically. In spite of the variety of local officials' strategies, they found alternative ways to care for the local population without aggressive interference in their inner-*jia* affairs, which accorded with their theoretical respect for the boundary between inner and outer and recognition of women's ideal segregated inner space.

Gender Considerations in Local Governments' Public Projects

Local governments were cautious and self-restrained in intervening in people's inner-*jia* affairs. By contrast, they could enjoy considerable intrusive power in the public world outside the *jia*, without any ideological concern with spatial limitations. Local officials had strong incentives to be committed to their responsibility for managing local affairs, including public services. Since Song women moved in the space outside the *jia* as their male counterparts did, they automatically became the beneficiaries of official public facilities such as public gardens, bridges, and roads. Consideration for gender does not seem to be discernible in most such public constructions. However, in Song Fujian, for a specific category—hot springs and attached bathhouses—we can see, on the contrary, local governments' intense concern with gender in the public space.

There were plentiful hot springs scattered in Fujian and favored by the local people as healthy natural resources during the Song peri-

od. In the local gazetteers of Fuzhou, Quanzhou, and Tingzhou, we can see abundant hot springs and attached public bathhouses built by local governments. Generally speaking, bathing was identified as a private behavior practiced inside the *jia* regardless of gender. From the ancient Confucian classic *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記) to the Song Confucian master Sima Guang's family regulations, women were always advised to use bathrooms separate from men in their common residences. In Song Fujian, local people took pleasure in the natural bathing resources in the open space outside the *jia*. The practice of men's hot spring bathing subverted the traditional idea of bath privacy, and in reality also prevented women's access to hot springs. However, the local governments' construction of hot springs and attached bathhouses provided both men and women with relatively separated places in accordance with conventional assumptions about baths. It guaranteed the natural resources' availability to women in the public space.

Local governments usually divided hot springs into two separate parts, for men and women, and built attached house structures on the basis of gender segregation. For example, in Lianjiang County 連江縣 of Fuzhou, there was a hot spring in Guanglin Li 光臨里 in the northwest. "During the Jiatai 嘉泰 period (1201–1204), the local magistrate, Zhu Ding 朱定, built two houses to separate men and women who took baths here."⁸⁸ In Yongfu County 永福縣 of Fuzhou, in Ward Fifteen 十五都 in the south, there were one "big hot spring" and one "small hot spring." "The big hot spring was divided into four ponds, and the small one was divided into two ponds. They were all covered with house structures. Each one was divided into left and right to segregate men and women."⁸⁹ In Changting County 長汀縣 of Tingzhou, in Qingtai Li 青泰里, there was a hot spring. During the Shaoxing period (1131–1162), people constructed a stone pond to surround the spring, and built two bathhouses at opposite ends to separate men and women. A shelter named "No Dirt" (*wu gou* 無垢) was established on the side, and the local magistrate, Li Ge 李格, wrote a tribute for it.⁹⁰

In these examples, all the hot spring buildings were constructed under the control of local officials. On the one hand, the popularity of such public facilities suggests the local governments' at least tolerant attitudes toward the local custom of bathing outside the *jia* with no regard to the users' gender.⁹¹ On the other hand, their special attention to separate bathhouses indicates that local officials attempted to maintain the idea of gender segregation even in the public field, where applicable. Popular public facilities such as bridges and roads functioned as communication

media in public transportation without gender discrimination. In contrast, hot spring structures could be modified to become gendered semi-private houses to demarcate an otherwise open space in which both men and women moved. The physical characteristics of hot spring buildings made it feasible for local officials to put the idea of gender segregation into practice in the outer-*jia* world, although it was not the same as the inner/outer demarcation that I have discussed in the context of the *jia*. We do not know if all or most hot spring baths were managed by the local governments in Fujian once they were built, but all existing texts show that local officials cared about gender segregation in the construction of public hot spring houses.

Besides distinct gender concern in the construction of some public facilities, local officials also manipulated a few public structures to propagate gender-related notions. From the discussion of the *jia* in the first chapter, we already know that local governments were in the habit of awarding extraordinary female figures honorable titles. They claimed official authority over local people, including women in spite of their relatively isolated lifestyle inside the *jia*, by inscribing the titles on lane gates or in the lanes. Local governments introduced female individuals' inner virtues to the public and promoted women's moral cultivation in the audiences' *jia*. Administrators avoided frequent contact with female individuals, and at the same time fulfilled the commitment to the betterment of local custom, including women's moral education. Furthermore, these honorable titles may have helped cultivate local women's sense of responsibility for the pride of not only their *jia* but also their local community, although unfortunately they did not leave us any such textual clues to read their minds. In some cases, the local government even used these titles to rename the lanes, which formed a characteristic gender phenomenon in Song Fujian's cultural geography.

Conclusion

As half of the population subjected to state authority, women interacted with its local representatives in various ways both inside and outside the *jia*. They may be categorized into two groups according to their either elite or non-elite family background. Women from elite families achieved abundant opportunities to influence local administration through human resources and social networks to which they had access in the domestic realm. Some of them gave male officials in their *jia* general or detailed advice on governmental affairs. Some managed bureaucratic recruitment

for male relatives. And some exerted their family power to challenge legitimate authorities. Their male contemporaries did not always think that women should keep out of public affairs. Many elite men accepted and even welcomed their female relatives' concern for local administration as long as women's suggestions sounded reasonable and productive. It weakens the assumption that there was a unified and dominant ideology of female seclusion or confinement in the Song period. In addition to recognizing women's agency in local administration, some male officials deliberately connected their domestic life to public governance, recruited their female family members into their local administrative strategies, and took advantage of these women's positive images for Confucian propaganda among the public. Some governmental structures were entitled with gendered labels, and thus they were transformed from physical symbols of governmental authority to public objects transmitting inner-*jia* ethics.

As for women from commoner families, their most frequent contact with local governments occurred when they were involved in legal cases. Acknowledging the privacy of the inner quarters in which women lived, important writers on local administration advised local officials to be careful in implicating women in public lawsuits, and many officials may have followed the advice. However, from female individuals' perspective, local governments were the only authorized organizations from which they were eligible to claim personal rights and pursue legal support. In this way, they appeared in county halls either reluctantly or voluntarily and argued or negotiated with other relevant agents on family affairs.

Besides dealing with women's lawsuits, local governments manifested deep concern for vulnerable females in general on two matters—abduction and infanticide. The two problems were closely related to local population management and thus were part of governments' administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, local officials made efforts to avoid penetrating women's inner quarters in adopting responsive strategies. They mobilized neighbors in local communities to supervise the movement of female population and employed economic aids to prevent villagers from killing female infants. No direct connection was established between the local governments and female agents who were threatened by abduction and practiced infanticide, which indicated local political authorities' respect for and protection of the privacy of women's inner-*jia* realm.

Although local governments endeavored not to force women out of their domestic chamber, they were aware of women's appearance in the sphere outside the *jia* and took gender into consideration in the construction of some public projects. When local people relocated the space

for personal bathing activities from the inner-*jia* field to the open hot springs, local governments were unable or unwilling to push them back. Instead, they built separated house structures for men and women to guarantee privacy and gender separation. Furthermore, they established gender-related public structures to promote domestic ethics and morality in the neighborhood and expected both male and female audiences' appreciation. In addition to accepting women's presence in the outer sphere passively, local governments made efforts to create new gender boundaries in the public domain, while at the same time employed the fact to permeate the orthodox boundary existing between inner and outer. Contextualized in the space of local government, gender boundaries formed and fluctuated through the frequent interaction between women and local administrators.



Women and Religion

The Song dynasty was a time of growth and prosperity for religious organizations in China, which experienced extensive commercialization and laicization. Buddhism, Daoism, and local religions competed with each other in this lucrative and vibrant milieu, and women played various lay roles as transmitters, pilgrims, and patrons, without departing from the normal *jia* system. Although laywomen did not claim celibacy like the Buddhist nuns and Daoist priestesses, their commitment to religion was expressed in complex and diverse ways as well. They conducted religious rituals at home and also participated in religious performances at local temples; they had intellectual exchanges with male elites in the family and occasionally visited Buddhist and Daoist masters at pilgrimage sites; they created objects and works of art related to religious beliefs in the boudoir, and they also donated wealth to sponsor local temples and priests. Laywomen could move back and forth between the domestic and public arenas, between inner and outer, and enjoyed the freedom to frequent religious markets. The boundary between secularity and spirituality was blurred, and women's space expanded into the religious field.

Women's involvement in religion may have been more prevalent in Fujian than other districts, considering it had the highest number of religious structures in the Song. The Southern Song scholar Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210), while taking a post in Fuzhou, noticed that “the custom of sacrifice and praying is most sincere in Min (Fujian) in comparison to other districts. Therefore, its temples (*cimiao* 祠廟) thrive and surpass

them all.”¹ Later on, Wu Qian 吳潛 (1195–1262), a Southern Song prime minister, presented a similar discovery in his official memorial: “[The number of] temples and shrines (*siguan* 寺觀) at different places varies. Hunan 湖南 has fewer than Jiangxi 江西, Jiangxi has fewer than Jiangzhe 江浙, and Jiangzhe has fewer than Minzhong 閩中.”² At least in the Southern Song, the temples in Fujian outnumbered all other culturally advanced districts throughout the empire.³ Many of them had splendid outlooks, and constituted an integral and impressive section of Fujian’s local landscape. The grandeur and proliferation of religious structures especially Buddhist temples in all the districts from North Fujian to South Fujian caught the attention of numerous natives as well as visitors. For example, Wang Xiangzhi 王象之, the author of the Southern Song geography book *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝, compares the famous three religious mountains in the city of Fuzhou to the homeland of immortals on the sea. He sighs that “thousand temples are scattered and connected like stars. This is a real Buddhist kingdom in the human world (*renjian zhi goguo* 人間之佛國).”⁴ While in the same book, he claims Quanzhou, the economic and cultural center in South Fujian had a long history of being called “the Buddhist kingdom” as well.⁵

As Valerie Hansen states, “throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the number of gods and religious consultants increased, giving lay people an ever-widening, occasionally bewildering choice.”⁶ This general assertion applies to Fujian, where a number of religions flourished during the Song period. In the turmoil of the late Tang, Wang Shenzhi 王審之 (862–925) established his military and administrative authority in Fujian. “After he entered Min, he extremely promoted and worshipped Buddhism. Therefore, the prevalence of pagodas and temples in Min topped all under the Heaven” in the Song.⁷ The development of Daoism here likewise benefited from the support of a number of local governors of the Min Kingdom. Sacred mountains, such as Mount Wuyi in North Fujian, witnessed the construction and renovation of many Daoist shrines under Song imperial sponsorship.⁸ The Ming compilers of Fujian local gazetteers reviewed its history of religious traditions, and exclaimed, “[Buddhist temples and Daoist shrines] reached a climax when it came to the Song! They occupied enormous lands in famous mountains and at sites of interest. Red buildings and beautiful structures spread out over counties and villages.”⁹ In addition to the extraordinary proliferation of Buddhism and Daoism, Song Fujian also experienced unprecedented growth of popular religions. The *Song huiyao jigao* preserves the records of ninety-five certified shrines in Fujian,¹⁰ which were

merely a small portion of the thriving and omnipresent local temples of a great deal of popular religions. The *Chunxi Sanshan zhi* 淳熙三山志, a Song local gazetteer of Fuzhou, points out local temples “have long traditions. In some counties there are several hundreds, too many to be recorded completely.”¹¹ The popularity of these local beliefs considerably added to Fujian’s religious dynamics.

There must have existed a huge population of clergy and lay believers who fostered the unparalleled religious market in Fujian. The temple of Dongchan 東禪寺 in Fuzhou, for instance, mobilized 10,000 households to sponsor its massive printing project of a multivolume tripitaka, which lasted twenty-three years, from 1080 to 1103.¹² It is reasonable to assume a substantial number of these donors were local women. The existence of numerous records of pious women from outside Fujian makes it uncertain whether Fujian’s extraordinary prevalence of temple culture resulted in local women’s comparatively more active religious practice. Nevertheless, as a group of customers favored by religious specialists, Fujian laywomen absolutely exerted considerable influence on local religious markets. As this chapter will show, their constant involvement in religious markets left a gendered imprint on the spiritual and economic domains that were nominally outside the *jia*. Their religious practices departed from the classical Confucian ideal but, surprisingly, were widely accepted by the male upholders of that ideal.

Laywomen in Confucian Eyes

For Song Fujian laywomen, religious practices were an essential part of their everyday life. In addition to developing religious routines at home, they visited temples occasionally to pray, purchased clerical services, participated in religious events, and made donations. Doing so not only displayed their religious commitment but also nurtured the local religious market. Confucian scholars, in spite of their advocacy of the classical ideal of gender segregation, unavoidably met with or heard about laywomen—relatives, friends’ family members, or local women without any personal connections. They recorded women’s religious actions and took their gender identity and religious inclinations into account in summarizing and evaluating their life experiences. These informative documents present multiple facets of women’s religious participation. Moreover, they provide us with a critical lens with which to investigate laywomen’s definition of their religious roles as well as the complexity of elite men’s thinking about gender and religion.

The authority of Confucianism was seriously challenged by Buddhism and Daoism in middle-period China. To reestablish Confucianism's status as orthodoxy, from the late Tang on scholars studied religious classics and composed essays that criticized Buddhism and Daoism, while at the same time incorporating aspects of the two into their reinterpretations of Confucianism. Many of the leading figures of Confucian resurgence in Fujian had a deep knowledge of Buddhism and Daoism, whose influence on their intellectual innovations is evident.¹³ They promoted Confucianism as the only appropriate way to realize self-improvement and fulfill obligations to family, society, and the state. Although they expected men to stay away from Buddhism and Daoism, they prescribed different family and societal roles for women, and thus dealt with women's religious beliefs and practices in more tolerant ways. Patricia Ebrey has noted Song elite men's general attitudes toward women's strong religious interest: "Confucian scholars, quick to condemn Buddhism in other contexts, were generous with praise for women who took it up."¹⁴ Generally speaking, elite men's anti-Buddhist approach did not lead to widespread resentment over women's engagement in Buddhist practice, although they viewed Buddhism men as a different and more serious problem.¹⁵

Ebrey explains elite men's tolerant attitudes by arguing that "if a wife turned to Buddhism to gain equanimity, she would be respected by all around her for enhancing the harmony of the house,"¹⁶ and "family harmony, a Confucian value, often could be attained no other way."¹⁷ Confucian scholars must have noticed Buddhism sometimes reduced women's anxiety and eased domestic tensions, very likely on the basis of their interactions with lay female relatives. Their tolerance grew from their expectation that women's religious beliefs benefited their *jia*. In addition to consolidating the *jia*, elite men also pointed out how women's religious devotion benefited the local community. In the discussion of women's benevolent behaviors in chapter 3, we have seen how laywomen's religious passion motivated them to help neighbors and villagers either occasionally or consistently. Among these devoted practitioners, laywomen from official families could even apply their religious philosophy to and exert influence on local administration via their male relatives. Their contributions to local society out of their religious faith caught elite men's attention. Even anti-Buddhist vanguards weighed the growth of family and local community over their personal philosophical beliefs. They compromised before laywomen's enthusiasm for Buddhism for the sake of reconstructing a harmonious Confucian society founded

on family propriety and rooted in local community. They contextualized women's religious pursuits in Confucian discourse. Their seemingly well-entrenched anti-Buddhist principle was not ubiquitously applied, which made social reality more complicated than their philosophical writings suggest.

Our knowledge of Song women's religious piety substantially derives from elite women's epitaphs. Although elite men generally approved of women's religious engagement in everyday life, many of them were not comfortable about writing it into women's posthumous biographies. Women's epitaphs were supposed to be circulated among a group of elite men, the affiliates of the writers and the deceased women's relatives as well. Moreover, the advance of printing technology and prosperity of commercial publication made women's epitaphs increasingly available to a general audience who were beyond their and the epitaph authors' personal networks.¹⁸ Although elite men's personal contact with laywomen might remain private in real life, their essays presented their attitudes toward religion to the public straightforwardly, which made writing about women's religious experiences problematic. On the one hand, recording a laywoman's religious interest might arouse the readers' suspicion of the author's integrity, especially if he was a determined anti-Buddhist. On the other hand, it did not give credit to or might tarnish the biographee's reputation because religion was not a conventional subject when eulogizing women's virtue, in the textual tradition of epitaph writing. One solution to avoid these possible disadvantages was to ignore female biographees' religious life. As Mark Halperin's research shows, some writers omitted references to Buddhist devotion in laywomen's epitaphs.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the information about women's religious aspiration remained considerable in Song epitaphs. In order to justify their records of women's religiosity and relieve readers' doubts of their appropriateness, male writers normally resorted to the strategy of highlighting laywomen's proficiency in managing domestic affairs.

In laywomen's epitaphs, male writers praised their religious pursuits, provided they did not abandon familial responsibilities. As Bettine Birge generalizes, "If women established families, served their parents-in-law, raised children, and thus fulfilled their duty to society in . . . Confucian terms, then lay Buddhist ascetic practices were acceptable and even praiseworthy."²⁰ Elite men applied such a pragmatic view of women's religious behaviors in everyday life to the writing of epitaphs, and took pains to articulate how the deceased fulfilled her commitments to the *jia* and at the same time practiced devotions. The deceased protagonists

were unexceptionally tailored to fit in the stereotype that a dutiful woman never neglected her primary domestic responsibilities in preference to her religious pursuits, although it could not have been the truth for many laywomen.²¹

Generally speaking, elite men seldom questioned women's personal spiritual pursuits, and women felt comfortable with their religious inclinations and were under no pressure to justify them in reality. Nevertheless, the records of women's self-justification of religious aspiration are available in some epitaphs. In contrast to men, who were invested with societal rights and responsibilities in the public domain, women were expected to stay inside the *jia*. Having no legitimate "outer" obligations, women were more likely to take up religious devotions to fulfill their spiritual needs in elite men's assumption. As Ms. Xiang 項氏, a lay Buddhist, told her husband,

Buddhism [leads people to] leave relatives and to disregard the difference between life and death. It is not the [right] way to manage the world (*jingshi zhi dao* 經世之道). We women have no outer affairs. Furthermore, I am nearly forty years old. I think my exuberant time has gone and want to stay away from worldly strife, so I let my heart be immersed in [Buddhism]. But you should not act [the same way]."²²

According to the author of Ms. Xiang's epitaph, she cited the prescriptive idea that "women have no outer affairs" to justify her dedication. She viewed it as reasonable for a woman beyond the child-bearing age to show interest in Buddhism. However, that rationale should not apply to men, she thought, since they continued to have responsibility for managing worldly affairs. The author of Ms. Xiang's epitaph, Liu Zai 劉宰 (1166–1239) studied the teachings of Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi 張軾 (1133–1180) at a young age, under the tutorship of the Fujian scholar Lin Fuzhi 林復之 (1151–1213).²³ In this commemorative text, he conveyed Ms. Xiang's words and thoughts in a vivid and seemingly trustworthy way. We are unable to tell whether Ms. Xiang really said and thought that way, but it is no doubt that Liu Zai considered it appropriate for a woman to justify her Buddhist belief by referring to the inner/outer vs. women/men division. Many male writers of Song epitaphs employed the "no outer affairs" claim to affirm the deceased woman's moral superiority. Although the legitimate association of women with "inner affairs" was well established, the implication of "inner affairs" was

subject to a variety of interpretations among Song moralists. As I have discussed in chapter 3, the *jia* was considered the crucial criterion in distinguishing inner affairs from outer affairs; however, “inner affairs” did not equal only “affairs that happened inside the *jia*.” Further, women’s personal spiritual pursuits had no place in this inner/outer framework, which was concerned primarily with women’s and men’s social responsibilities. Elite males’ tolerant attitudes coincided with the absence of women’s religious devotion from the gender norms in Confucian discourse. It allowed women some autonomy in cultivating their spiritual interests and granted elite men a fair excuse to include women’s religious experience in epitaphs.

Ms. Hu’s epitaph, which was composed by a Fujian elite, Yuan Shuoyou 袁說友 (1140–1204), provides us another example to investigate laywomen’s self-justification in men’s narratives. After Ms. Hu’s husband died, she “admonished the two sons even harder. [She] did not go outside and became more interested in self-improvement. She said, ‘I am old. Those whom I served and those whom I respected have all passed away. What do I do now?’ She thus withdrew from household management and did not care about either miscellaneous or major household affairs. She studied Buddhist classics and developed a personal feeling for and interpretation of them.”²⁴ Like what Liu Zai did in writing Ms. Liang’s epitaph, Yuan Shuoyou used Ms. Hu’s own words to explain and justify her religious devotion in this text. It is said that Ms. Hu clearly knew that familial responsibilities preceded her personal psychological needs, and only after her parents-in-law and husband all died did she consider her responsibility to the family at an end. She withdrew from household management and turned to Buddhism for spiritual support. Liu Zai let Ms. Liang and Yuan Shuoyou let Ms. Hu speak up for themselves not because they expected laywomen to defend their religious pursuits, which seemed unnecessary considering elite men’s tolerance of women’s religious life in general. The message that Liu and Yuan attempted to convey to the male readers was that even women knew the discrepancy between them and men in terms of social roles and men should not practice religion the same way as women did. Unlike old women who fulfilled household tasks and could retreat to religion, men’s familial and social commitments never ended. Transmitting such an opinion in the women’s own words made it more appealing and convincing, regardless of the facts. Elite men transmitted “women’s voices” beyond the *jia* to engage male readers in anti-religious discourse. In sum, male authors not only justified women’s religious interest in writing epitaphs to protect

their and the deceased laywomen's fame, but also manipulated the texts to imply their personal disagreement with men's religious devotion and discourage their fellows from it.

Among the Fujian Confucian classicists, many had strong interest in and profound knowledge of Buddhism and Daoism. Compared to contemporaries uninterested in religion, they had a better chance of understanding and positively engaging with laywomen. The shared intellectual interests contributed to their respect for laywomen's eruditeness and motivated communication on religious matters. Li Gang 李綱 (1083–1140) and Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269) were two men who exemplified this attitude.

Li Gang, an important political and military figure during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition, grew up in an elite family with strong Buddhist inclinations.²⁵ He studied Buddhist texts and communicated with Buddhist masters throughout his whole life. Nevertheless, he established close relationships with neo-Confucian pioneers such as Yang Shi 楊時, and was worshipped by Zhu Xi²⁶ and even compiled into the lineage of Fujian neo-Confucians afterwards.²⁷ He insisted on the dominant role of Confucianism among the three teachings and believed Buddhist discipline could contribute to Confucian moral cultivation.²⁸

Li Gang confirmed the positive value of Buddhism and praised lay people's Buddhist devotions without gender discrimination. Among the many laywomen he directly or indirectly knew, his mother-in-law impressed him the most in terms of her Buddhist knowledge and womanly virtue. Li Gang's father-in-law "was straightforward and blunt, and never stepped back in the face of [difficulty]." Li's mother-in-law, Ms. Huang, always advised her husband,

"Among the Six Perfections of Buddhism,²⁹ wisdom is the most important. It is valuable to use expedience and cunning to work everything out. Now, since you are attempting to do something in today's world, how could you not know this?" Zhang Gen was deeply impacted by her words. He took indirect routes to practice his Way (*Dao*) and for over a decade, people in the two circuits [where he served] benefited greatly [from his administration]. Later on, he irritated [the authorities] with his words and was punished. Ms. Huang calmly [accepted this]; she smiled at Zhang Gen and said, "You already know what wisdom is, can't you also fully commit yourself to the principle of patience?"³⁰

Ms. Huang appropriated Buddhist philosophy to persuade her righteous husband to take up crafty political stratagems. She used the Buddhist terms such as “six perfections” and “wisdom” with no further explanation, suggesting that she assumed Zhang Gen’s awareness of these terms and ideas. Ms. Huang must have noticed her husband’s acquaintance with Buddhism through observation of his everyday life or conversation inside the *jia*. According to Zhang Gen’s epitaph, he “never put aside books in his life time. Therefore he knew astronomy, geography, divination, cartography, calendrical science, and mathematics thoroughly, and had an unusually profound understanding of Buddhism.”³¹ Thanks to his broad reading habit, Zhang Gen immediately grasped his wife’s point and could adjust his administrative style according to her advice. When his career was ended through treachery, Ms. Huang again used Buddhist ideas to rationalize his failure and calm him. Although Zhang Gen was presented here as simply receptive, we can imagine the couple’s vivid exchanges on Buddhist ideas based on their common reading interests.

Li Gang expressed great admiration for his parents-in-law’s companionate relationship. He attributed Zhang Gen’s official achievements and mental tranquility to Ms. Huang’s wise Buddhist advice, and presented her as a dutiful “inner helper” in conformity with Confucian expectations for women. In addition to applauding her laywoman’s wifely virtues, Li Gang stated his personal appreciation of her Buddhist knowledge. In the last paragraph of her epitaph, he recalled their final conversations. In 1120, Li Gang was expelled from the capital for political reasons and paid a visit to his parents-in-law in Raozhou 饒州 on his way back to Fujian. He “stopped for more than ten days and listened to her untiring talk thus forgot all his fatigue.”³² Miscellaneous family affairs that a mother-in-law and a son-in-law would normally discuss are not mentioned at all. It was her profound Buddhist knowledge that impressed Li Gang the most and what he thought worthy of being recorded in her memorial text. Ms. Huang’s “opinions were so insightful that even scholars knowing Buddhism well could not reach her level.”³³ Considering Li’s career crisis at that time, Ms. Huang must have used Buddhist thinking to comfort him as she had done for her husband. In this commemorative document, Li Gang provided details of Ms. Huang’s everyday life to display her womanly virtues; however, he used his personal experience in their conversations to present her as a respectable matron and to confirm the value of her Buddhist belief.

Born one century after Li Gang, Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 was an active neo-Confucian scholar and official in Southern Song Fujian.

Following his mentor Zhen Dexiu, he devoted himself to advocating Zhu Xi's *daoxue* 道學. Like Li Gang, he was bred in an elite family with distinctive Buddhist inclinations and wrote a series of epitaphs for women devoted to Buddhism, including his mother and sisters.³⁴ Liu thought highly of his mother's and second sister's unparalleled enlightenment. In the epitaph written for his second sister, he recalled that his mother "comprehended Buddhism so deeply that even famous senior Buddhist masters would bow to her wisdom. Only my sister was witty enough to debate with her."³⁵ Liu's sister "served Ms. Weiguo 魏國 (her mother) [devotedly], and was never more than one step away from her."³⁶ She must have become aware of Buddhism in her childhood under her mother's care in the natal family. Liu Kezhuang recalled that she was an extremely filial daughter. She prayed to the Buddha for their father's health, mourned his death and conducted vegetarian diet for three years. After she married out, she frequently returned to her sick mother's bedside to take care of her and offered her spiritual support. Very likely they resumed discussing Buddhist issues to comfort the mother in her physical affliction. Liu was moved by the intimacy between his mother and sister, which accorded with the Confucian value of filial piety and was enhanced by their common Buddhist inclination. It was in his everyday experience with these immediate female relatives that he noticed and appreciated the similarity between Confucian and Buddhist moral concerns in the domestic context.

In addition to female family members, Liu got to know laywomen from other *jias* through male-bridged connections. He visited one Lady Zheng frequently when he was her son's colleague and was grateful for her hospitality. He likely learned the details of her life through personal communications with her or her relatives. In the commemorative eulogy, he sighed,

No more pity for aging over ninety;	九秩復何憾
Past glory deepens sorrow after death.	生榮沒更哀
[Her behavior in] the inner chamber sets a	
standard for [all women] under the heaven	
to follow;	閨門天下則
Her stature comes from [her devotion to]	
Buddhism.	地位佛中來
[She read] palm leaf [manuscripts] ³⁷ from the	
preface;	貝葉從頭看

[She] planted pagoda trees³⁸ in the garden
 with her own hands.
 Maid hears the strike of *qing* at dawn;³⁹
 Still expects [her] to come back from
 meditation.⁴⁰

庭槐一手栽
 侍兒聞曉磬
 猶恐坐禪迴

Unlike comprehensive epitaphs that were full of details, poem-like eulogies were composed to summarize the deceased's most distinctive and memorable aspects. In this four-couplet verse, only the third one is a straightforward description of Lady Zheng's life. In spite of his compliments about Lady Zheng's womanly virtue, Liu Kezhuang represents her life through exclusive reference to distinctive Buddhist icons. He viewed it appropriate to select both the reading of Buddhist texts and cultivation of trees associated with temples in the household courtyard as typifying this elite woman's life experience.

Liu Kezhuang, like his contemporary Confucians, expected and recognized the positive aspects of women's religious conditioning, but he went further, attempting to explain laywomen's good deeds in terms of neo-Confucian theory. In Ms. Gu's 顧氏 epitaph, Liu interpreted Buddhist moral sentiments and behaviors in terms of the core neo-Confucian idea of "principle (*li* 理)." "[Ms. Gu] did not read but her sense of right and wrong all conformed to principle. . . . In her middle age, she liked Buddhism. She did not limit her belief to the teaching of [Buddhist] images, but engaged in cultivating her own mind." All this conformed to the neo-Confucian emphasis on self-improvement and made her Buddhist practice unusual for an average laywoman in Liu's eyes. "The learning of the Way and the attainment of Confucian sagehood were exclusively reserved for men" as Ding-hwa Hsieh argues.⁴¹ Neo-Confucian scholars did not expect educated women elites to read neo-Confucian texts or study neo-Confucianism as men did, never mind illiterate women like Ms. Gu. However, women were also manifestations of the universal principle (*li*) and could come to understand it through self-cultivation, according to neo-Confucian theories.

Liu Kezhuang believed that Buddhist self-cultivation could lead to Confucian ethical gains, and manipulated laywomen's epitaphs to disseminate neo-Confucian values. Laywomen who did not read neo-Confucianism literature could be marked with neo-Confucian labels. Ms. Gu was not a unique example. Another woman, Ms. Zhang 張氏, became a Buddhist before the age of thirty, and Liu Kezhuang stated

that her philosophical height could not be reached by versed laymen. Liu rehearsed the details of her everyday roles as a laywoman, a wife and a mother, respectively, and thought highly of her tranquility at critical moments. From his point of view, people superficially attributed her calmness to cultivation of a peaceful mind as in Chan Buddhist discourse. But he intentionally dilutes the religious color, and argues that her remarkable composure “actually conforms to Confucian texts. What she has achieved humiliates [male] scholars. She is so worthy (*xian* 賢) that her offspring will definitely prosper.”⁴² He explains a laywoman’s exemplary deeds with Confucian norms and uses her example to encourage male scholars to pursue moral perfection. The commonality of Confucian and Buddhist ethical concerns, and their combined influence on women’s everyday lives meant that laywomen’s behavior was subject to a wide range of interpretations. Neo-Confucian scholars like Liu Kezhuang recognized and respected women’s religious pursuits, and took advantage of their own membership in the writing culture to use reference to those pursuits to reinforce the dominance of Confucian values among male elite.

Li Gang and Liu Kezhuang lived a century apart and their different evaluations of laywomen in epitaphs suggest an evolution in Confucian scholars’ attitudes toward Buddhism in the Southern Song period. Li Gang valued Confucianism over Buddhism in spite of his simultaneous promotion of the two teachings. He applauded his mother-in-law’s admonitions based on a Confucian rationale⁴³ yet admired her Buddhist achievement. Liu Kezhuang juxtaposed the importance of the two teachings in laywomen’s everyday lives, highlighting the superiority of Confucian values and integrating Buddhist morality more closely into neo-Confucian discourse.

Contextualized in the development of neo-Confucianism in Song Fujian, Liu Kezhuang’s strategy can be traced back to Zhu Xi, the synthesizing neo-Confucian master he so admired. Zhu Xi himself composed several epitaphs for women with Buddhist inclinations. Ms. Yu 余氏 was one of these. Zhu Xi acclaimed this devoted Buddhist adherent as a virtuous daughter, wife, mother, and benefactor, and used the word “worthy” (*xian* 賢) to encapsulate her life experience. The meaning of *xian* in pre-Song texts is complex. It could have various—or similar—connotations that crossed genders, depending on the context. A “widely used moral category” in the Confucian classics, *xian*, as Nanxiu Qian points out, “depicts those who possess both the *de* (virtue) and *cai* (ability and/or talent) to actualize virtuous qualities.”⁴⁴ The connotation fluctuated owing

to the continuous redefinitions of virtue and talent in later imperial history. Mark Halperin employs Song women's epitaphs to discuss different interpretations of women's "worthy" among male contemporaries, and argues elite men used it to praise female individuals "of superior character" and various attributes.⁴⁵ However, Zhu Xi termed Ms. Yu "worthy" for her fulfillment of all the social obligations required of "a human being to establish himself/herself as a human being."⁴⁶ In this sense, "worthy" transcends its general connotation of women's "extraordinary conduct in everyday matters,"⁴⁷ and is elevated to the level of metaphysics, in conformity with Zhu Xi's philosophy. It became a normative stature, within the reach of average people, despite gender and class differences. This reinterpretation was sustained in neo-Confucian discourse and adopted by later followers such as Liu Kezhuang as a measure of laywomen's achievement.

Zhu Xi's theory contradicted the understanding of some of his contemporaries who attributed women's good deeds to their Buddha-like nature and Buddhist belief. Li Shi 李石 (1108-?), an earlier scholar from Sichuan who lived through the Northern Song–Southern Song transition,⁴⁸ heard a saying that "three of women's natures (*xing* 性) essentially conformed to Buddha's heart." Women's natural tendency to affection, thrift, and self-confinement were in accordance with Buddha's heart of compassion, frugality, and quiescence, respectively.⁴⁹ Such correspondence between Buddha's nature and women's nature must have been accepted and circulated by some elite men, but was not compatible with Zhu Xi's redefinition of human nature based on ancient Confucian classics. In Ms. Yu's epitaph, Zhu Xi did not criticize her for Buddhism but dismissed her religious practice. He lamented that people praised her Buddhist learning, and sighed that "such words make light of her indeed!"⁵⁰ As Bettine Birge has argued, "Lay Buddhist practices closely resembled the ascetic value of neo-Confucianism."⁵¹ Taking advantage of the indistinguishable difference between Confucianism and Buddhism in this respect, Zhu Xi "idolized" the laywoman Ms. Yu as "an outstanding model of Confucian virtue."⁵² In my understanding, Zhu Xi neither cared about Ms. Yu's intellectual approach, nor attempted to identify her as Buddhist or Confucian. He explicitly informed his male elite readers that Confucianism outweighed Buddhism in terms of its recognition of the individual's social value and Confucian moral judgment applied universally regardless of gender and religious inclination.

Of the various competing religions, Confucian revivalists viewed Buddhism as the most serious rival and attempted to substitute Confucianism for Buddhism in guiding people's everyday lives. Despite the

obvious imitation and internalization of Buddhist ideology, these thinkers were sensitive to and determined to defend themselves against the charge of Buddhist inclination.⁵³ As Robert Hymes has pointed out, in the interest of diminishing the influence of Buddhism and Daoism, Zhu Xi and his movement “offered point-for-point institutional and ritual substitutes for what Sung religion offered.”⁵⁴ However, these innovations focused on the clerical religion and left domestic devotions untouched. It is reasonable to assume that vernacular religious stories and relatively simple ritual practices might appeal to average people including women more than the formal sophisticated Confucian narratives. Zhu Xi’s *daoxue* did not provide laywomen, especially illiterate women, an alternative avenue of spiritual pursuit, which might partly explain why its practitioners tolerated women’s religious activities inside the *jia*. Zhu Xi clearly stated his objections to Buddhism in his *daoxue* programmatic works, but he maintained a relatively open attitude toward women’s Buddhist practices. Such tolerance seems to have been pragmatic and popular among Song Confucian revivalists, whether they disliked Buddhism like Zhu Xi or had deep knowledge of and compassion for Buddhism and other religions like Li Gang and Liu Kezhuang.

Confucian scholars, including serious critics of Buddhism like Zhu Xi, eulogized and elevated laywomen’s religion-related virtues in their posthumous biographies. However, the generally benign attitude preserved in this literature was not faithfully adopted by all of them in home lives. Some authors may have praised laywomen’s pious Buddhist practices because of requests from the deceased’s relatives they simply could not refuse; still, they found it difficult to accept their own immediate female relatives’ religiosity. Hu Yin 胡寅 (1098–1156) provides a good example of this. Hu was an influential figure from the prestigious Hu family of Fujian, which carried on the Cheng learning and “was somewhat of an anomaly at the time in its uncompromising hostility to Buddhism” according to Tillman’s study.⁵⁵ He wrote of some laywomen’s Buddhist commitment in a seemingly positive tone,⁵⁶ but fully displayed his anti-Buddhist sentiment in the memoir written for his wife. According to Hu Yin, his wife Zhang Jilan 張季蘭 (1108–1137) did not “believe in ghosts or notions of incarnation.” She usually accompanied the husband when he read and wrote at night. When Hu Yin was working on the *Treatise on Promoting Orthodoxy*, a three-volume anti-Buddhist thesis much appreciated by Zhu Xi, which subsequently inspired his anti-Buddhist theory, Zhang Jilan consulted with Hu and understood his key points. She agreed with his anti-Buddhist arguments, and vowed that neither

of them would have a Buddhist funeral after they died.⁵⁷ Her initial disinterest in religion was eventually replaced by a strong anti-Buddhist stance under her determined husband's consistent influence. Despite his compromise in documenting unknown women's religious pursuits, Hu Yin gradually and successfully led his wife to an anti-Buddhist conclusion, a progress he proudly recounted in her memorial text.

Liu Zai 劉宰 (1166–1239), another dedicated Confucian revivalist who lived decades after Hu Yin, also struggled to persuade his wife to embrace his anti-Buddhist approach. As previous examples have shown, Liu Zai composed a number of epitaphs for laywomen praising their various virtues. He did not criticize their religious pursuits, but discouraged women in his own *jia* from taking up Buddhism. His second wife practiced Buddhist devotions at home, but he “discussed with her how Buddhism and Daoism weakened the Way with the [false] reality of ghosts and deities. She seemed suddenly to be enlightened and never practiced Buddhism again.”⁵⁸ In contrast to his tolerance of non-relative laywomen's religious thoughts and conduct, he attempted to quash his wife's religious activity inside the *jia*. This contradictory attitude suggests his conflicted feelings about Buddhism, feelings that might well have frustrated many of his contemporaries. He wanted women to give up religious belief, but he had to confront Song women's massive commitment to Buddhism. Lacking official or moral authority to intervene in other families' women's lives, he did not admonish them about their spiritual pursuits but sought other ways to compromise between the ideal and the practical. On one hand, he collected examples of laywomen's fulfillment of familial responsibilities to convince himself as well as his readers that these women practiced the Confucian Way. On the other hand, he sought to influence family such as his wife and put his anti-Buddhist ideals into practice. Liu Zai might have viewed forcing someone to give up their religious pursuits inappropriate and infeasible, which could explain why he worked on his wife by face-to-face persuasion. Moreover, his discussion of the Way—a metaphysical and ethical theme in Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian discourses—suggests that he treated his wife as an intelligent counterpart rather than an obedient subordinate. Whether his wife really abandoned Buddhism or just stopped practicing when he was present, Liu Zai was satisfied with the results of their conversation.

In both Hu Yin's and Liu Zai's cases, the laywomen they exerted influence on were their wives. In comparison to mothers, whose household authority was ensured by the Confucian virtue of filial piety, wives were viewed as equal or subordinated, depending on the husband's view

of the ideal conjugal relationship.⁵⁹ This discrepancy among women's domestic identities decided that pious wives rather than mothers might be the more likely targets of Confucian conversion. Moreover, by using their own wives as examples, Hu Yin and Liu Zai made it fairly encouraging to the epitaph readers that male scholars were at least able to persuade spouses to give up religious beliefs even though intervening in women's religious pursuits in general seemed unrealistic for the time being.

In sum, elite men recognized the religious beliefs of laywomen for whom they wrote commemorative essays out of intellectual or pragmatic concerns. Some of them ardently eulogized these laywomen's extraordinary religious cultivation; some neutrally recorded their religious behaviors without comment; some deliberately avoided addressing women's religious interests; and some ambitiously and skillfully employed Confucian notions to reinterpret laywomen's religious behaviors. Their approaches toward kinswomen also varied depending on the extent to which they were devoted to the anti-religious enterprise. Personal preference resulted in their recognition of or opposition to laywomen's religious observance within their households. Nevertheless, no matter how sincerely they aimed for a Buddhism-free world, they all considered women's religious space a relatively independent one, in which men should not forcefully interfere.

Personal Practices

Song scholars did not apply their intense criticism of religion to pious women inside the *jia*. Elite men's tolerant and sometimes supportive attitudes contributed to the prevalence of women's personal religious practices. Although religions in the Song like Chan Buddhism "offered an alternative to the Confucian norms of gender and sexuality," as Ding-hwa Hsieh suggests,⁶⁰ "women of independent minds and religious aspirations" did not tend to claim celibacy. Upon fulfilling their familial commitment as "inner helpers," an enormous number of Fujian women actively practiced religions in the domestic compound and advanced their religious pursuits in multiple ways. Mark Halperin does a comprehensive survey of Song epitaphs, and concludes more than 22 percent of elite women practiced Buddhism.⁶¹ Presumably the proportion of elite and commoner laywomen believing a wide range of religious teachings among the entire female population was considerably higher. And taking into account the extraordinarily strong religious atmosphere in Fujian, I

believe the percentage of laywomen there was far higher than the average level that Halperin has calculated by examining empire-wide cases.

Meditation and chanting originated from temples and constituted a universal way to practice Buddhism and Daoism. They were widely imitated by lay people, although practitioners in many cases “appeared ignorant or unconcerned about the fact that their activities derived from Buddhist monastic roots” as Mark Halperin has suggested.⁶² They were probably the most popular religious practices across class and gender thanks to their privacy and low cost.⁶³ By the Song, meditation had become an integral part of the Buddhist and Daoist traditions, which made up the lion’s share of the religious landscape. In Fujian, many devout laywomen practiced meditation routinely in their daily life. For example, Li Gang’s mother-in-law was obsessed with Buddhism in her middle age and became increasingly disinterested in worldly affairs. “She tidied one separate room for herself, where she sat at her leisure all day, entertaining herself with Buddhist pursuits.”⁶⁴ She intentionally arranged a quiet and separate environment for her meditation to exclude family members’ interference. The private space she constructed for her own spiritual pursuit was not subordinated to any domestic norms in spite of its physical existence inside the *jia*.

The idea of conducting meditation and chanting in segregated locations was advocated in Song Buddhist manuals. In the “Method of Worshipping the Water-moon Master Perceiver” (*Shuiyue guanqizai gong-yangfa* 水月觀自在供養法), the faithful are instructed this way:

Recite the mantra facing the image. All your desires will be fulfilled in a short time. If you want to have food and clothing, stay in an uninhabited place, choose either a pure place or an ordinary place, burn incense and prepare flowers to worship the Great Compassionate Worthy One (*Dabei zunzhe* 大悲尊者). All your sins will be dissolved. Your worldly and otherworldly desires will be accomplished.⁶⁵

The manual concentrates on one specific bodhisattva, and the assumed readers were exclusively people who were devoted to or at least interested in the Guanyin 觀音cult. However, the method presented in this passage seems to have been widely adopted by Buddhists no matter what deity they believed in and worshipped. A Buddhist image, an incense burner and flowers are typical props that facilitated Buddhists’ communication with deities in a temple. By furnishing an unoccupied

room in the inner quarter with these religious objects, a laywoman created a ritual space greatly resembling a monastery. By shutting the door and blocking the relatives' inquiry, she created herself an isolated space, for the sake of spiritual independence instead of gender segregation. Enclosure did not necessarily indicate women's subordination, but on the contrary may exemplify their agency, depending on the context.

Many records in Fujian address laywomen's favoring a private space while practicing meditation and chanting with no special reference to their worship preferences. Like Li Gang's mother-in-law, Liu Kezhuang's mother also "swept a room, sat quietly all day, and achieved insightful and subtle [Buddhist knowledge] unavailable from [pure] sutra reading."⁶⁶ At Liu's home, a separate room provided his mother an ideal setting to further her religious pursuit and contributed to her profound understanding of Buddhism through meditation. Both meditation and chanting required concentration. Enclosing themselves in segregated rooms ensured they would not be interrupted by or interrupt family members. Laywomen established such places in the inner quarters, but what they conducted inside were by no means inner affairs. Their religious pursuit transcended the mundane boundary between inner and outer, and transformed these private rooms into sacred facilities for communication with the supernatural world.

Meditation tends to be quiet, but chanting is vocal and catches non-practitioners' attention. According to a Song poem, sounds that people heard in Fuzhou were Buddhist chants from every family besides ritual music from local schools.⁶⁷ It seems Buddhist chants penetrated local residents' everyday lives in Fujian regardless of their varied personal beliefs and gender identities. Both meditation and chanting require mental concentration and consume physical energy. Over Ms. Chen's 陳氏 whole life, "she was devoted to chanting Buddhist books and did it tens of thousand times. Her son and nephews persuaded her to stop [chanting] considering that she was old and frequent chanting might drain her *qi*. She replied, 'What human hearts feel comfortable about could not even be prohibited by state statutes, what [human hearts] do not want could not be encouraged by state rewards. My [commitment to] chanting is like that of your father to flower planting.'⁶⁸ Ms. Chen's obsession with chanting worried her children who cared about her health. They opposed to her chanting, a type of Buddhist practice, but not her Buddhist life. She responded by suggesting that chanting helped her achieve peace and happiness. Viewing chanting as a personal matter, Ms. Chen implied that the children should respect her independent will in decid-

ing whether to continue the practice. And very likely she would not give it up. By taking advantage of the domestic authority she achieved in Confucian discourse, she refused male family members' intervention in her spiritual world.

The word for chanting in Chinese texts is *song* 誦, which literarily means reciting or reading out loud. Religious studies suggest that specific texts, including Buddhist sutras and Daoist classics, "have an inherent power which can be ritually reproduced or internalized."⁶⁹ As Ter Haar argues, "The priority of the internalization of a text's meaning and power by repeated oral repetition, rather than analytical understanding" made "it available to the predominantly illiterate group of non-elite practitioners."⁷⁰ Chanting proved to be an easy and practical way for lay people to achieve and transmit the power of text without regard to gender, class, family and educational backgrounds.⁷¹ However, depending on levels of literacy and memory capacity, ways of chanting varied from simply invoking the name of Buddha to reading out or reciting religious texts. In comparison to illiterate laywomen who learned, understood, and recited religious texts through oral transmission, literate or semi-literate devotees were able to read religious texts and develop their own interpretations of Buddhist sutras or Daoist classics. Their meditation and chanting involved more digestion and internalization of knowledge than simple recall and repetition of information they received from somebody else.⁷²

In Song Fujian laywomen's epitaphs, male authors usually used the phrase *song foshu* 誦佛書 (reciting Buddhist books) to describe Buddhist chanting practice, which conformed to these female protagonists' elite class identity and advanced educational background. For example, Ms. Fang 方氏 "chanted Buddhist books every morning after she woke up, and only paused in case of sickness."⁷³ Ms. Chen 陳氏 insisted on chanting in spite of her old age and her children's disagreement.⁷⁴ Ms. Liu 劉氏 "was obsessed with Buddhist books, and never stopped chanting in the morning even on extremely hot or cold days."⁷⁵ All these women viewed the practice of chanting Buddhist texts as a crucial, necessary, and life-long obligation to realize their religious goals.⁷⁶ Chanting is an efficient means of learning. After many rounds of repetition, chanters are able to memorize the texts they read out aloud. Among the elite laywomen who favored chanting religious sutras, some proved to have outstanding memory capacity and techniques.⁷⁷ Miriam Levering's study of Buddhist scripture has shown reciting and copying sutras is "a generalized meritorious action" for both monastic and lay Buddhists.⁷⁸ Laywomen, although situated inside the inner chambers, dealt with scriptures and accumulated

religious merits the same way as monks and nuns in temples in terms of individual practice.

Generally speaking, an elementary education started with the study of fundamental Confucian classics for girls in elite families. Once literate, they were able to develop their own reading habits and interests. Among the available reading resources, religious canons, especially Buddhist books, attracted many of them. Lin Hanzhai's 林寒齋 wife, Ms. Chen 陳氏, "was prudent and intelligent. She understood most Confucian and Buddhist books well, and memorized outstanding compositions of the past and present."⁷⁹ Her reading interests were broad enough to cover a variety of texts including Confucian and Buddhist classics as well as literary works. Patricia Ebrey's study of pious upper-class wives has shown the attractions of the Buddhist message for women, while the survey of religious women in Fujian reveals some elite women also demonstrated considerable interest in Daoist canons. For example, Li Gang's mother-in-law "was unusually brilliant when she was a little girl. She chanted tens of thousands of words every day and knew their meaning thoroughly. . . . Her view was broad, deep, and insightful, especially on Laozi and Zhuangzi's works."⁸⁰ Both Ms. Chen and Ms. Huang's reading experience involved, but was not exclusively limited to, religious texts. Although this is not specifically articulated, it is reasonable to assume they read many books besides the orthodox Confucian literature prescribing women's roles. Textual sources of diverse origins and categories contributed to the construction of individual women's knowledge, and thus made their intellectual worlds more complicated than their male counterparts might expect.

Inspired by different ideas, some women developed and expressed their own intellectual preference, while some accepted and practiced knowledge from various traditions simultaneously. Huang Chong's 黃崇 wife, Ms. You 游氏, is an example of the latter.

[Ms. You] chanted the *Admonitions for Women* and other [Confucian] classics every day to keep herself alert. She also believed in and respected Buddhism quite a lot. Whenever she got pregnant, she sat upright in a quiet room, burned incense and read Confucian and Buddhist books. She did not shout loudly or stare angrily, and said, "This is the way ancient people did prenatal education."⁸¹

Ms. You's simultaneous interest in the Confucian classics and Buddhist texts did not conflict but proved compatible in Ms. You's experi-

ence. She sought a subtle balance between the competing teachings in her spiritual world, and skillfully manipulated these intellectual resources to handle everyday affairs in different fields. Her femininity, determined by reproduction, was tempered by her self-identification as a serious Confucian scholar and a pious Buddhist follower. Elite women's access to different intellectual and religious resources broadened their vision, but did not necessarily lead them to favor any one specific school.

From these cases we can see that educated women showed remarkable interest in religious texts. Unfortunately, the origins of these books were seldom addressed in their biographies. They might have received them as gifts or purchased them at a local book market or temple.⁸² Due to their appreciation of the value of books, literate or semi-literate laywomen were more likely to collect, preserve or even recreate Buddhist or Daoist classics than illiterate ones. Some may have hoped to own religious books in the afterlife.⁸³

The fragility of paper books and the widespread looting of Song tombs has meant the poor preservation of religious texts, but even isolated examples are revealing. Thus far, the only extant example of Song women buried with their beloved sutras come from Ms. Sun's tomb in Jiangsu in south China.⁸⁴ According to the epitaph written by Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067), the tomb occupant, Sun Siniangzi 孫四娘子, liked chanting Buddhist texts.⁸⁵ Eleven volumes of sutras, including hand-copied and printed versions, have been excavated from her tomb. A note on the back cover of one of these sutras states that Ms. Sun “donated property to redeem the sutras temporarily and will worship them eternally.”⁸⁶ This annotated script may have been purchased by Ms. Sun at a local temple in 1055, when she accompanied her husband to his official post in Nanjianzhou in Fujian.⁸⁷ Although it is unstated whether Ms. Sun herself desired to go to the grave with these sutras, her relatives who arranged the burial respected her Buddhist belief and placed the sutras by her side to offer her comfort and protection in the afterlife. What she valued was not only the Buddhist teaching recorded in the books, but also the physical books that carried these theological ideas.

Some elite women saw books as a material embodiment of their spiritual devotion. They personalized their ready-to-use Buddhist sutras by the process of consumption. While some went even further to personally reproduce religious texts.⁸⁸ Their Buddhist manuscripts, fashioned from their own hands, present a much stronger sense of individuality. These women's stories suggest that laywomen viewed religious books as not only texts transmitting specific knowledge, but also important

material media that displayed their religious faith. In this way, even illiterate women might have valued Buddhist or Daoist scripts in spite of being incapable of deciphering their text.⁸⁹

Other than religious books, a variety of objects functioned as resources through which laywomen could lay claim to religiosity. Sacred images of deities such as Buddha and Bodhisattvas were probably the most popular. John Kieschnick suggests that images “allowed the ordinary person to experience Buddhism in a manner that was at once powerful and intimate, without the immediate intervention of learned intermediaries explaining what should be felt, what should be understood.”⁹⁰ The creation and consumption of religious iconography were widely accepted as sacred practices among Song laypeople. Sacred images “rendered the religion tangible and proximate for any who wishes it, from the most erudite of monks to the illiterate devotee.”⁹¹ As Huang Gan noticed, in addition to the prevalence of Buddhist monasteries, people in Fujian put up wooden statues and paintings in family halls (*tangdian* 堂殿) or bedrooms (*zhengqin* 正寢) and worshipped them day and night.⁹² For laywomen who generally spent more time inside the *jia* than men, observing Buddhist images available at home helped realize their devotions. Like their male counterparts, some laywomen participated in the creation of these powerful images.⁹³ The creation of Buddhist images demanded talent and practice, and contributed to accumulating good karma. Not all laywomen were capable of making Buddhist paintings. Where they lacked such talent, lay devotees could purchase the images at the flourishing religious markets or order customized images at professional artisans’ workshops, depending on their expectations and financial resources. The value of material as well as artistic quality determined prices that must have varied widely, but the shared sacred motifs made all Buddhist images respectable items worthy of preservation in the eyes of Buddhists.

The epitaph composed by Liu Zai 劉宰 for his second wife, Ms. Liang 梁氏, gives us details about how laywomen valued religious images. Ms. Liang “formerly believed in Buddhism. After she arrived [at the Liu family household], she carried the images (*xiang* 像) and accessory sacrificial objects on her person, and at any time might be heard chanting.”⁹⁴ The word *xiang* literally means images of figures, in this case, representations of Buddhist deities, most likely paintings or sculptures.⁹⁵ Although Liu Zai’s account does not describe the precise form of Ms. Liang’s Buddhist images, the fact that she carried them with her all the time suggests her obsession with these objects. She had owned them as a girl and transported them from her natal family to her marital one

as important personal belongings. In spite of her physical relocation, these old Buddhist images helped maintain consistency in her spiritual practice, and provided her an outlet for anxiety during her transition between the social identities of daughter and daughter-in-law.

Gender bias was usually not evident in the consumption of religious objects. Nevertheless, women seem to have used more versatile handicrafts than their male counterparts in producing religious goods. As Marsha Weidner states, "Needlework was the premier feminine art, one measure of a woman's worth."⁹⁶ Among the multiple techniques facilitating the material rendering of religious images, needlework, especially embroidery, was a gendered skill mainly associated with women.⁹⁷ Wang Tinggui 王庭珪 composed a eulogy to commemorate Chen Huishu's 陳晦叔 wife, Lady Lu 盧氏, in which he stated that "[she displayed] lofty demeanor in the inner chambers, and for years [she was] on a vegetarian diet and embroidered in front of Buddhist [images]."⁹⁸ The former part of the couplet is a general commendation of Lady Lu's womanly virtue, while the latter addresses everyday life details about her Buddhist enthusiasm. No matter how Wang Tinggui gained the information, the record of Lady Lu's religious practice in the boudoir must be considered trustworthy since the intended recipient of this memorial text was Chen Huishu, who must have been familiar with his wife's domestic life. Although the subject of Lady Lu's embroidery was unknown, her work setting suggests a connection to Buddhism. Laywomen sewed religious dedication into the stitches, but their embroidery capabilities must have varied. It seems only those who were inventive and confident about their dexterity were likely to create religious embroideries, whose quality presumably decided whether they were able to please the supernatural.

Embroidery is a sub-skill in textile production—a conventional domain of women's work. In traditional China, individual households and state recognized the economic value that women's weaving yielded, and scholars and officials advocated the importance of women's work in realizing the ideal Confucian social order based upon the classical division of labor—"men till and women weave." Francesca Bray's exploration of women's work in late imperial China reveals "women were deskilled, and the contribution to textile production was devalued, marginalized, or subsumed within male-headed household production" from the Song to the Ming.⁹⁹ In spite of the general marginalization of women's roles in textile industry, their embroidery of religious images was insulated from the increasingly commercialized economy, and consistently appreciated in religious discourse over the course of the Ming and Qing dynasties.¹⁰⁰

The sacred motifs, ascetic process and embedded sanctity demarcated religious embroidery from what scholars have been focused on in deciphering women's embroidery in late imperial China—the sewing that symbolized the leisure and training that women were offered in well-off families.¹⁰¹ In comparison to basic weaving skills such as reeling, spinning and looming, embroidery demands more concentration. Grace Fong has studied religious embroidery motifs in Ming-Qing women's poetry, and interprets embroidery as “a feminine activity that fits into a contemplative mode.” Although women sometimes embroidered collectively in the inner quarters to consolidate their sisterhood or friendship, religious embroidery was characterized by its privacy. “Practiced alone in the quiet of the inner quarters, the concentration and the repetition of the stitching take on a meditative, religious quality.”¹⁰² The mental concentration and physical agility that women conducted in embroidery could transform into religious merit. It is somewhat ironic that the “bodily and visual discipline”¹⁰³ that grew out of women's practice of doing embroidery as a form of religious devotion also defined ideal womanhood in the Confucian discourse.

The most popular Buddhist embroidery motifs were Buddhist deities, as is evident in elite men's eulogies of women. Li Gang wrote a poem about an embroidered *Guanyin*, one of the most widely worshipped bodhisattvas in the Song—“*Guanyin* Bodhisattva has marvelous wisdom, and is present in every temple. [This *Guanyin*] appears from [the work of] needle and thread, but [his/her] supernatural power is the same.”¹⁰⁴ Li Gang noticed the prevalence of *Guanyin*'s visual and material representations in Buddhist temples. He viewed this *Guanyin* icon fashioned of textile as a vivid medium displaying *Guanyin*'s efficacy and arousing prayers' veneration. Although the authorship and location of this *Guanyin* embroidery is not stated, the poem painstakingly describes its decoration and accessories, and proclaims its high artistic achievement. Embroidery, conventionally attributed to women and interpreted as a womanly skill set and source of virtue, when contextualized in a religious setting, was appreciated variously by elite and commoners. Where commoner lay people venerated religious embroideries as sacred objects, elite males could be connoisseurs and judge them as artworks in addition to appreciating them from the perspective of worshippers.

Laywomen applied their handicraft skills in the service of their beliefs, and their products of religious merit were not limited to embroidery. Li Gang left another essay exalting a woman's talent at creating Buddhist icons. He poeticized his sincere appreciation of a splendid fabric

pagoda. In the preface, he states, "This girl of the Chen family in Shaxian County 沙縣 knotted five-color silk threads to make a multi-color pagoda, and donated it to Master Can of Xiyun Temple. Can showed it to layman Liangxi [Li Gang]. The layman then composed a Buddhist hymn to extol it."¹⁰⁵ Ms. Chen appears to be a faithful Buddhist who made the most of her handicraft skills to create an impressive knotted artifact praised by both Master Can and Li Gang. No matter whether the silk pagoda was sent to the local temple by the girl herself or her relatives, the temple received it as a token of her devotion. Ms. Chen's family background is unstated, but it is reasonable to assume many women, including commoners, contributed their wisdom and hand skills to the creation of sacred objects, with the intention of demonstrating religious virtue and garnering merit as Ms. Chen did. The study of Song laywomen has mostly been the investigation of elite women because their biographic narratives, which were substantially preserved in elite men's collections of writings (*wenji* 文集), were the most concentrated and informative sources that scholars have primarily drawn upon. Nevertheless, a great deal of women from commoner families constituted the majority of the lay population. They had no chance to become protagonists in epitaphs collected in elite men's *wenji*, but might occasionally attract elite men's attention and be recorded because of their outstanding handicrafts. Therefore, a more extensive exploration of laywomen's material traces in non-epitaph writings proves necessary and promising, even within literati's *wenji*.

Normally speaking, producing textiles with religious motifs implied female craftsmanship, and thus was different from meditation and chanting, which was indiscriminately practiced by all lay believers. Such a distinct demonstration of women's agency may have attracted many laywomen's attention. Their production of religious objects was probably not unusual, although most of their products may have disappeared without leaving any material hints or textual records. They could have worshipped and consumed sacred images and objects the same ways their male counterparts did, but their gendered training and technical skills also inspired alternative ways of creating Buddhist iconography other than the prevailing methods of painting and sculpting. Laywomen could empower themselves by combining holy motifs with personal crafts in weaving, embroidering, knitting and knotting on fabric, all without leaving the inner chambers. The Qing historian Susan Mann considers women's embroidery "the hallmark of late Qing domesticity" before it entered the world market in the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ She and Francesca Bray both contrast "domesticity" with commercialization in the

study of women's embroidery. However, religious embroidery, although without being commercialized, did not necessarily fit in the category of "domesticity." By sticking to the label of "domesticity," we may overlook the expansive networks that women's embroidery and other handicrafts had engendered beyond the inner quarters in either middle period or late imperial China, which might involve laywomen, laymen, nuns, monks, local elite, and officials. Some of laywomen's products including embroideries may have stayed with the creators in their boudoirs for personal worship, some were probably gifted to acquaintances who shared the same religious interests, but many made their way to regional temples as Ms. Chen's case suggests. Yuhang Li states that women's creativity in making Buddhist embroidery at home "was actually driven by the integration of a Confucian discourse of constraining women within the domestic space."¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, I think such creativity may have been inspired by their expectation that their products might leave the domestic space and make their Confucian virtue and religious devotion publicly visible and recognized. Unlike money and valuable goods that clerics received from many female donors, the personalized handicrafts were sometimes put on display in temples. Their aesthetical attractiveness, together with clerics' appreciation and temple visitors' exclamation, may have stimulated more women's contribution to monastic material culture.

To conclude, laywomen's religious routines inside the *jia* helped construct a domestic religious space where they enjoyed extraordinary autonomy in a virtual as well as a physical sense. In conformity with worshipping practices in temples, meditation, chanting, and reading of sacred texts in the inner quarters reinforced women's intellectual consciousness, and helped them transcend the inner/outer boundary spiritually. Moreover, the domestic consumption and production of saint images and religious artifacts enriched their life experience of material culture, and made their connection with the sphere outside the *jia* unavoidable, visible and sustainable.

Religious Communication with Relatives and Outsiders

Laywomen's practices of meditation, chanting mantras, copying sutras, and creating sacred images in the inner quarters all testify to a personal agency that underlay their religious beliefs. However, their spiritual pursuits were not limited to the personal. In many cases, they cultivated religious interests under the influence of relatives and developed them

beyond their kinship networks. In conformity with their prescribed “inner” role, laywomen participated in various forms of religious communication without leaving their legitimate space—the *jia*. Ebrey investigates where Song laywomen learned Buddhism, and summarizes the origins into three categories: Ch’an masters, nuns who were invited into the women’s quarters, and other lay women in the women’s quarters.¹⁰⁸ In addition to these associates, Fujian laywomen’s extensive social network connected them to many lay relatives and non-relatives, male and female.

In their early stages of socialization, girls might learn religious ideas and practices from immediate family such as parents and grandparents. Among their relatives, young women did not learn religious precepts merely from laywomen in the inner quarters. Male family members may also have played important roles. For example, Ms. Huang, Li Gang’s mother-in-law, cultivated the habit of reading as she grew up in her natal family. Li Gang described her as a prodigy, who displayed outstanding intelligence, being able to read and understand classical texts at an early age. Raised in an upper-class official family, Ms. Huang must have had access to women’s educational texts. However, she appeared to be more interested in philosophical and religious knowledge. Her father not only provided her a wide range of books, but also spent time discussing the readings with her. He was impressed by her unusually profound understanding of Daoist narratives and enjoyed the sophisticated intellectual exchange with her on the metaphysical and ethical Way.¹⁰⁹ He was probably his daughter’s premier mentor, but would likely view her as an intellectual peer once she grew up.

In comparison to fathers, mothers normally spent more time with daughters at home regardless of class background, and thus were more likely to exert religious influence on girls and transmit their personal beliefs to the next generation as an essential part of women’s culture. As Huitzu Lü has observed, “Young girls’ religious practices in the Song period were usually inspired by their mothers.”¹¹⁰ This mother-daughter sharing of religious belief sometimes went beyond domestic conversations. Wang Huizhen 王惠真 “loved the theories of Buddhism and Laozi at an early age, and studied [Buddhist and Daoist] books every day in her old age.”¹¹¹ One of her daughters “studied the ways of Buddhism, and became a nun.”¹¹² Although Wang’s biography does not leave any detailed information about her communication with her daughter, she must have played a crucial role in encouraging her commitment to Buddhism. We do not know Wang’s attitude about her daughter’s ordination, but lay parents normally did not support such an inclination.

Fang Song 方崧 was a local scholar in Putian 莆田. He “only had one daughter. He loved her so much that he definitely wanted to marry her to [a son-in-law] from a good elite family. So she was engaged to . . . Cai Tuan 蔡湍. She was bright and calm, gentle and prudent, and treated her parents in an extremely filial way. She once wanted to cut her hair and become a nun to repay her parents’ nurture. The parents did their best to dissuade her.”¹¹³ In the last sentence, the use of the adverb *li* 力 “forcefully, mightily” is suggestive of the parents’ anxiety and determinedness to stop her formal ordination. The parents must have known her Buddhist approach before she informed them of her plan of ordination. It seems they had tolerated her religious life and would not oppose if she never came up with the extreme idea of leaving the *jia*.

Grown-up daughters took their religious beliefs to another *jia* after marriage. Some kept them to themselves, whereas others willingly communicated with their husbands’ family members about their religious knowledge. They could be influenced by and influence immediate relatives in the same living quarters through the sharing of texts and conversations. Moreover, ritual performance also played a role in transmitting religious knowledge in a domestic setting. Nie Rouzhong 聶柔中 “understood Daoism and Buddhism thoroughly and was able to recite many [Daoist and Buddhist texts]. She lit incense to pray sincerely in the courtyard at midnight and practiced [the praying ritual] more and more frequently in her old age. Her sons and grandchildren all respectfully accompanied and attended to her; they dared not leave until she had finished the process.”¹¹⁴ Ms. Nie was raised in an elite family and gained her religious knowledge from texts. Unlike meditation or chanting conducted separately from the rest of the *jia*, her devotions in the courtyard were witnessed, accompanied, and respected by her descendants, presumably both male and female. Although it was not stated how she learned this form of devotion, her activity set an example for the other individuals residing in the same compound. Contextualized in an enclosed and tranquil setting at night, Ms. Nie’s sincerity and performance, as well as the sacrificial accessories, must have impressed her family members with the sacredness of religion and aroused their religious sentiment. The witnesses were subordinated to the power of rituals, which informed them of the detailed ceremonial procedures that they could imitate and undertake afterwards, even if their involvement was unintentional initially. In comparison to elite classical learning, ritual practice functioned in a more straightforward, accessible, and replicable way; it allowed the inculcation of religious ideas with no regard to the

participants' educational background. Laywomen were thus capable of transmitting religious messages to family relatives orally, textually, and ritually, which exposed members of the same *jia* to the power of religious thought and sentiment. Moreover, the relocation of some of the recipients may have resulted in the dissemination of the very knowledge outside the *jia*.

Other than the interaction with family who shared the same living space and religious interests, the arrival of visitors also provided laywomen with occasional opportunities to exchange religious ideas with outsiders. In previous examples, we have seen that Li Gang visited his mother-in-law and enjoyed their conversations about Buddhism. Marital networks expanded laywomen's social space and broadened their search for religious fellows. Such networks might introduce far-flung relatives having similar spiritual interests, and thus encourage their mutual identification between different inner quarters.

In addition to male relatives, the friends and colleagues of husbands and sons might also visit women for the sake of friendship. Many of the commemorative narratives composed by Fujian elites for friends' mothers or wives addressed their personal contact. For example, Huang Gongdu 黃公度 wrote a biography for Chen Junqing's 陳俊卿 mother in which he stated that "I and Junqing passed the civil service examination in the same year, and were colleagues in Quanzhou. I ascended the hall and knelt in front of the madam to pay my respects many times, and thus knew her deeds thoroughly."¹¹⁵ Huang Gongdu's narrative suggests that visiting colleagues' and friends' mothers was well accepted in this time. Men's concern about showing respect to seniors this way opened legitimate channels for women inside the *jia* to exchange ideas with outsiders.

Although the records seldom refer to details of their communication, it is reasonable to assume that some laywomen got acquainted with visitors on the basis of having a similar religious consciousness. For example, the mother of Huang Zhu 黃銖, a friend of Zhu Xi, was reportedly a famed writer who called herself the Lay Daoist of Chongxu 沖虛道人.¹¹⁶ She probably discussed Daoism with male scholars outside her family. In Huang Zhu's words, his mother "was extraordinarily smart at an early age. She read all the histories and classics, and was able to recite the texts after reading them once. When she was thirty, my father died. She upheld the ideal of chastity till she died."¹¹⁷ Huang Zhu collected and recorded some of her most popular lyrics.¹¹⁸ Many of her writings were addressed to "old friends"—male scholars whom she had known for a long time. There is no record of how Huang's mother initially met

and connected with these male outsiders, or which ones became her close and lasting friends. However, her face-to-face conversations and correspondence with them surely would have touched on Daoist themes, considering her self-identification as a devout Daoist laywoman.

Unlike non-relative men who met laywomen inside the *jia* at the introduction of the women's male relatives, concerns with gender segregation did not apply to female visitors whose visits could be more casual and intimate. A shared interest in and experience of religion contributed to the formation of women's culture and the development of sisterhoods beyond the *jia*. In the *Yi jian zhi*, Hong Mai recorded a story of two laywomen's friendship.

The daughter of Wen Shu had married Mr. Chen in Xiuzhou, but got divorced. She lived at home studying Daoism. Daoist Yang, also a daughter from an elite family, lived together with her. In 1154, Wen passed South Quanzhou 泉州 on his way to his post in Zhangzhou. He lodged in the temporary house of the commissioner in charge of waterway transportation. His daughter, Yang, and two maidservants stayed in the western chamber.¹¹⁹

In this story, the protagonist Ms. Wen returned to her natal family after divorce and probably invited Ms. Yang, called "Daoist Yang," suggesting her full commitment to Daoism, to stay at her father's place. Their shared devotion to Daoism likely explains why the two women chose to live together, to the extent that when Ms. Wen followed her father on his assignment to Fujian, Ms. Yang went along. Both women came from elite families, very likely received similar educations, shared spiritual pursuits in common, cohabited in one chamber, traveled together, and were attended by the same maidservants. This intimacy might seem abnormal since the two women from different families behaved the way unmarried biological sisters usually did inside the *jia*.¹²⁰ Although Hong Mai does not present any evidence to confirm their close relationship, his narrative leads the readers to attribute their friendship to their shared Daoist beliefs no matter how Wen and Yang got to know each other. Such a sisterhood, based upon same religious pursuits, was not problematic in Hong Mai's eyes.

The interactions between women from different *jias* were subject to less restriction than those between men and women. Outside men's visits

were conducted in the public arena of the hostesses' *jia*—the main halls (*tang* 堂), whereas female guests were invited into the hostesses' private chambers (*shi* 室). When men and women met, women moved beyond the orthodox inner/outer boundary of the middle gate and presented themselves in front of outsiders. The formal setting of the residential hall could have reinforced women's self-perception as inner beings and made the religious conversation theoretical or superficial. In contrast, when women met women from other households, they were treated with friendliness in familiar feminine settings probably equipped with religious interior decoration. Their communication might include exchanges of personal feelings, religious interests as well as womanly practices they could not expect their male counterparts to appreciate or record.

In sum, laywomen's religious approaches and practices usually were influenced by and most impacted family members living under the same roof. They discussed religious issues with parents, husbands, siblings, and children, learned the household procedures of religious rituals from them, staged sacred performances in the domestic courtyard, and expected the younger generations to carry on the heritage by following their examples. Without moving beyond the *jia*, they could meet male or female visitors from other families, and exchange religious knowledge. The friendships between lay people, once established, could be further strengthened by exchanges of letters or gifts, depending on the participants' literacy and handicraft skills. Women's "rituals and religious sentiments are termed 'domestic religion,'" notes Dorothy Ko, "in the sense that they were embedded in everyday life in the inner chambers and were integral to the women's worldviews and self-identities."¹²¹ Religious commitment profoundly impacted laywomen's domestic life style, while personal religious practices as well as interpersonal communications in the inner quarters sustained the domesticity of laywomen's religious beliefs. Chün-fang Yü argues for the rise of a kind of "domesticated religiosity" in late imperial times.¹²² Nevertheless, contextualized in the religious discourse, the domesticity did not show any indication of confinement since spirituality was absent from the inner/outer gender framework defined by Confucian scholars. Laywomen forged an independent spiritual space where they exerted ultimate authority. In the process of pursuing religious aspirations, their practices were significantly in accordance with monastic traditions, their knowledge and reputation was transmitted from one *jia* to another via diverse connections, and their material products flew to other households, temples, and local markets. Although physically

practiced in the inner chambers, the “domestic religion” exposed women to a highly fluid society characterized by extensive networking and intensive communication between inner and outer.

Religious Excursions

Besides taking advantage of the religious outlets available inside the *jia*, laywomen, like their male counterparts, occasionally stepped out to explore a broader religious world and advance their religious interests. The prosperity of Buddhism, Daoism, and local popular religions in Song Fujian offered laywomen multiple choices when they considered available religious resources in the outer sphere. They were exposed to an intricate spiritual world and became conspicuous customers of the thriving religious market. The unusually high density of religious institutes and buildings may have made religious service easily accessible and resulted in their intense contact with clergy and integration into the local lay community. Laywomen frequented local temples, which provided them a variety of material and human resources by which to display their dedication, seek spiritual comfort, request blessings; they might even attend monastic events. The solemn temple architectures, sacred furnishings, divine idols, sacrificial objects, professional clergy, devotional peers, and the sound of mass chanting all helped create a sacred atmosphere that aroused sincere religious feelings and aspirations.

The most commonly claimed reason for temple visits was to pray for blessings. As Richard von Glahn asserts, “The popular pantheon that emerged in the Song rendered the gods accessible and responsive to ordinary people.”¹²³ Lay people treated deities as trustworthy and compassionate authorities, and viewed temples as their residences. Although laywomen were able to and did pray in the inner quarters, they frequented temples, presented their concerns and requests to the icons of deities, and anticipated the deities’ efficacy. Numerous local temples across the Fujian Circuit welcomed religious believers with goals and destinations. Some gained a prominent reputation and attracted laywomen from beyond administrative boundaries. For instance, the Shrine of Lantian 藍田宮 was a popular pilgrimage site in Yongfu 永福 County. Zhang Jingzhong 張景忠 wrote an essay to eulogize it: “Every morning in the bright sunshine, local men and women dressed up formally, leaned forward to express being ready to serve, prayed and chanted. People came from all the neighboring villages, counties, and prefectures, and

the flow [of people] did not stop all day long."¹²⁴ Laywomen in Yongfu and other districts visited the Shrine of Lantian with great reverence. They wore formal refined garments and comported themselves devoutly, assuming that their appearance and behavior would be observed by the deities and influence their response to the prayers.

On certain occasions, laywomen's relatives such as mothers and husbands accompanied them to the temple in hope of securing deity-blessed good fortune. For example,

Huang Kuo 黃廓, a local scholar from Xinghua 興化 County, had no children. He took his wife and concubine to visit a Buddhist temple and prayed in the Arhat Hall 羅漢堂. That night, he dreamed that he counted the number and order of Arhats with his wife and concubine, and when they reached the same Arhat, they smiled at each other. The Arhat suddenly looked at them and said, "Three years between the former one and the latter one." After waking, he remembered every detail of his dream. His wife and concubine had the same dream that night, but none of them knew how to interpret it.¹²⁵

Although we may doubt whether the figures in the anecdote existed historically, having no children was obviously a serious matter in the Song, and people went to the temple together in hopes that deities would send them children. In this story, no matter who initially proposed the visit, Hong Mai's narrative leads the readers to believe Huang himself played a key role in organizing the trip. All three had prayed in the Arhat Hall and should have counted the number of Arhats as the dream suggests. It is unknown if they had exactly the same dream or merely claimed to have had, but the fact that they discussed their dreams suggests that male and female prayers both believed they were able to contact the divine beings. Concern about procreation was one of the most frequent motivations behind lay people's visiting temples. A couple in Jianzhou (建州) "were in their forties, but had not children. Their house was close to the Temple of City God (*Chenghuang* 城隍). They prayed to the City God many times requesting a descendant."¹²⁶ After one year, they dreamed that the City God notified them he was moved by their devotion and promised to offer them a son. Like the Buddhist Arhats in Huang's story, the City God in Jianzhou was also respected by local people who desired offspring and was known for kindly answering their requests in a dream.

Men and women hoping for descendants prayed to deities having no specific reproductive functions such as the Arhats and the City God. But well-accepted sacred figures from the traditions of Buddhism and Daoism,¹²⁷ as well as a variety of new deities in popular religion, became known as reproductive deities and were widely worshipped in Fujian and all over the Song Empire. For example, the Temple of Gan-ying 感應寺 in Xianyou 仙遊 County of Xinghua 興化 Prefecture was erected to worship Ms. Chen, a witch (*nüwu* 女巫). According to the local gazetteer, "Pregnant women all prayed to her, and her efficacy was extremely powerful."¹²⁸ Both male and female deities were believed to respond to people's request for fertility. Nevertheless, the compassionate supernatural caretakers of pregnant women were more likely to be females like Ms. Chen, which accorded with what women expected and experienced in real life.

Laywomen informed the divine of their concerns or anxieties in either casual oral or formal written ways, and hoped for the divine's compassionate response. They visited local temples to bring health, wealth, and good fortune back to their *jias*. Beyond these functionalist purposes of temple visits, local sources also present a vivid picture of laywomen's enthusiasm for and active pursuit of the knowledge and entertainment temples offered.¹²⁹ Laywomen were able to manage their spiritual lives as "domestic religion" inside the *jia*, but many of them desired clerical preaching and collective religious practices. At temples, Buddhist monks and nuns, Daoist priests and priestesses, as well as other religious professionals were all happy to provide service to lay people in exchange for economic sponsorship, and thus competed for a reputation and potential customers in the same local communities.

Laywomen in Fujian exhibited special interest in Buddhist monasteries. In south Fujian, "Zhangzhou 漳州 Prefecture used to be called 'the Kingdom of Buddha.' Men and women flocked to Buddhist temples and organized 'associations of sutra preaching.'"¹³⁰ Zhangzhou had a long Buddhist tradition, and lay people there had been used to the widely available and easily accessible monastic resources. They learned and shared Buddhist knowledge under the guidance of professional clergy. In comparison to their private practices in the *jia*, local temples offered laywomen a public educational space, where accompanied by peers they received professional intellectual support unavailable at home. Besides listening to sermons, there were opportunities to meet prestigious masters who traveled around preaching. Laywomen's zeal was ignited when religious celebrities arrived in their local region. Zhang Shengzhe 張聖者, a

famous religious figure from Yongtai 永泰 County in the Southern Song period, toured Fujian and made a short stop at the Temple of Anguo 安國寺. "One young woman joined the crowd to visit him. She asked him for his shoes. [Zhang] could not refuse and gave them to her."¹³¹

Laywomen in Fujian went to temples to attend lectures, share religious information, and to witness and participate in religious ceremonies. They consumed the religious service at local temples and made continuous material and monetary contributions to these organizations. The value of their donations depended on personal and family finances. Some presented handmade artifacts with religious motifs, some hired workers to make religious objects, some paid for the cost of ordination certificates, and some donated money and land for the construction of religious buildings.

As discussed earlier, women might copy sutras, embroider images of Buddha and bodhisattvas, or make fabric pagodas inside the *jia*. Many of these devotional products were taken out and sent to temples. Some were preserved by the clergy, and some were put on display and thus became visible to peers, although their authorship was probably not revealed. In addition to personal creations, there is also evidence of laywomen directly donating money to have monastic objects manufactured. Among the stone inscriptions in Fujian temples, many record details of local lay people's patronage. A typical narrative runs as below:

"[I], layman Wang Sheng 王勝 and my wife Chen Liuniang 陳六娘 both decided to donate money to the Temple of Nanjian 南澗寺 for the sake of our biological parents, respectively. One incense furnace was made, and pine trees and bamboo have been planted to provide everlasting shade. We do not expect too much, but hope that our fortune can be prolonged."¹³²

Unlike those wives who supplemented husbands in sponsoring temples for the good of their in-laws recorded in many inscriptions in monasteries, Chen Liuniang and her husband solicited fortune for their own sets of parents. The affection that Chen had for her natal family was respected by her husband, substantiated by her donation, witnessed by the temple visitors, and presumably blessed by the deities. The Temple of Nanjian was located on a popular site in the city of Fuzhou—Mount Wushi 烏石山. The Chen couple donated money to cover the cost of making the incense furnace and planting trees, objects that physically manifested their sponsorship, and became part of the temple's grounds,

to demonstrate their religious virtue. Obviously the Chen couple did not contribute any labor in the production of these offerings. Furthermore, the purchase of materials and management of labor were likely handled by temple staff, who were more familiar with the market providing religious facilities. However, as generous patrons, the Chen couple should have had the right to decide what their financial support would be spent on. The process of donation always involved communications between the lay donors and monastic recipients, but the details of these transactions are by and large absent in historical documents.

Laywomen's monetary contributions also supported the production of other popular monastic objects. In the biggest Buddhist temple of Fujian—the Temple of Kaiyuan 開元寺 in Quanzhou—symmetrically stand two Song pagodas on the two sides of the axis in the praying courtyard. One of them preserves an inscription from the early Southern Song period:

Liang An and wife Liu Sanniang from Younan Xiang¹³³ donated money to have two treasure pagodas constructed, and prayed for peace together. The *yichou* year in the Shaoxing Reign (1145). The seventh month.¹³⁴ 右南廂梁安家室柳三娘捨錢造寶塔二座，同祈平安。紹興乙丑七月題。

The pagoda is 5.48 meters high, easily catching visitors' attention in the open and spacious courtyard. And the twenty-eight-character inscription in large font is clearly visible at the top of the pagoda base, informing numerous visitors of a laywoman's sponsorship. The inscriptions at the temples of Kaiyuan and Nanjian both place the male donors ahead of the females. Such standardized records indicate that husband did or at least was expected to play a leading role when husband and wife were both engaged in religious donation, which was in conformity with the dominant gender hierarchy in the mundane world. Interesting, a silver Guanyin statue was discovered inside the pagoda in a Typhoon accident in 1982 and provides us an alternative way to perceive wife's religious role in husband's eyes. On the back of this 15.5-centimeter-high statue inscribe fifty-two characters in five lines:

The female lay disciple Liu Sanniang and the husband Liang An from the Xuanming Lane of Younan Xiang in Quanzhou donated one pagoda together for eternal worship. [Wish] all family members' fortune and longevity extend. It is someday

in the sixth month of the fifteenth year in the Shaoxing reign (1145). The lay disciple Liang An inscribes.¹³⁵ 泉州右南廂宣明坊女弟子柳三娘与夫主梁安共捨寶塔一座永充供奉。闔家人口等，增延福壽。時紹興十五年六月日。弟子梁安題。

This inscription was dated one month earlier than the one on the pagoda. It seems the Liang couple gifted the Guanyin statue to the temple of Kaiyuan and donated money for the construction of one pagoda in the sixth month of 1145. Some unexpected changes must have happened, and two pagodas were erected under their names in the seventh month. In contrast to the inscription on the exterior of the pagoda, the statue inscription was buried inside and thus inaccessible to the public. Although the inscriber of the exterior text is not identified, the husband, Liang An, claims his authorship for the statue inscription.¹³⁶ He states his and his wife's lay identity and co-sponsorship, but surprisingly places her name in front of his. The abnormal writing may incite various suspicions. Maybe the donation was initiated by Liu Sanniang; the Guanyin statue was Liu's personal belonging; or the money given to the temple was Liu's dowry. Although no supplementary sources are available to prove any of these presumptions, it is no doubt that Liang An valued the wife's Buddhist piety enormously, and conveyed the appreciation in an exceptional way. The rear of the Guanyin statue was normally invisible, no matter it was displayed or stored in the temple before being permanently concealed. Away from public gaze, it may have provided Liang An with an ideal material medium to express his affection for the wife, who shared his religious pursuit and practiced it the same way he did.

The development of local temples in Fujian greatly relied on laywomen's donations. For example, Ms. Xu 徐氏 from Puyang 莆陽 "liked the teachings of Buddhism. Bells were cast, monks were fed, and Buddhist statues were repaired and decorated. The expense was too great to be calculated."¹³⁷ In this case, Ms. Xu's support to these monastic projects exemplified her devotion to Buddhism. Her wealth exempted her from providing any personal service, and at the same time functioned as a resource from which she could accumulate merit. For the local temples, new and renovated facilities increased their attractiveness. It encouraged the clerics to engage more in fundraising among laywomen, and may have resulted in their more frequent interaction. Zhu Xi noticed Fujian monks' active involvement in networking, and castigated that their most

dangerous behavior was talking with women whenever they saw them.¹³⁸ He may have exaggerated the real condition because of his strong anti-Buddhist sentiment, but the complaint indicates communicating with local women and soliciting their sponsorship must have been prevalent among religious clerics in Fujian.

Laywomen's donations could be enormous. In addition to miscellaneous stuff, temples themselves, the physical shells housing all sacred objects, were sometimes constructed by laywomen to express their religious enthusiasm. In Putian 莆田 County, Chen Rubao's 陳如寶 widowed wife, Ms. Wang 王氏, "had no children. She maintained her chastity and supported her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law died at the age of eighty-one. Ms. Wang donated money to build a temple on Mount Dong 東山 of Pinghu 平湖, which was named 'Temple of Obedience to the Mother-in-law (*Shungu si* 順姑寺).'

¹³⁹ Although Ms. Wang's motivation for constructing a new temple is not addressed in the gazetteer, the temple's name suggests this project involved the commemoration of her deceased mother-in-law. Building a temple was an expensive, complicated, and time-consuming enterprise. Although it is unknown what roles Ms. Wang played, she at least initiated and was a major backer of the project. Being a widow with no descendants, Ms. Wang must have been in charge of all her husband's household property. Once she passed away, all the family wealth would "go to agnatic relatives in order of closeness," according to the statute regulating cut-off households in the *Song Penal Laws* (*Song xingtong* 宋刑統).¹⁴⁰ We know nothing about the relatives in her husband's lineage, but might assume that some of them did not want to see the money flow to the temple at their expense. In the litigious Fujian, conflicts and legal disputes over household property inheritance were not unusual, as is evident in the *Minggong shupan qingmingji*. It is unclear whether Ms. Yang's activity aroused any opposition, but the fact that Ms. Wang succeeded in having the temple constructed indicates that she was able to make the most of her legitimate authority in managing her nuclear family's property in honor of the deceased mother-in-law. The temple's name was probably suggested by Ms. Wang to demonstrate her filial virtue and justify her expenditures on temple building in resistance to pressure from relatives.

Ms. Wang's case was not unique. As Liang Kejia 梁克家 (1128–1187) informs, "Wealthy people, old men and women (*fumin wengyu* 富民翁嫗) donated all their property to have temples erected without limits" in Fuzhou.¹⁴¹ The Fujian female patrons in the above examples, no matter widowed or not, all controlled sizable property. It may explain

why Liang Kejia identified female sponsors as “old women (*yu* 嫗),” who presumably had more authority over household property than young women in reality. They transmitted family wealth outside the *jia* to advance their spiritual pursuits in the name of praying for the family fortune to continue. And their capability at managing household property must have helped determine the scale of their sponsorship. In the eyes of visitors to local temples, their names, the architectural structures, as well as the objects produced, purchased, and donated by laywomen, exemplified the possibility and acceptability of laywomen’s involvement in monastic affairs. This must have inspired more of them to join the ranks of patrons.

Laywomen in Fujian not only spent money on visible and tangible objects in temples, they also sponsored monastic personnel and paid for their ordination expenses. “In the Shaoxing 紹興 reign (1131–1162), Zhang Jun 張浚 was the general commander of Min (Fujian 閩). His mother, Ms. Mo 莫氏 gave many ordination certificates to the Temple of Dongchan 東禪寺, and asked them to select followers for tonsure.”¹⁴² Ordination certificates were official documents exempting the named Buddhist monks and nuns from tax and labor services. Throughout the Song, the central government issued ordination certificates as a way to increase state revenue and their value proved more consistently reliable than paper currency.¹⁴³ As a high-ranking official’s mother, Ms. Mo spent considerable wealth on the purchase of ordination certificates and donated them to a local temple. She did not participate in the selection of the specific beneficiaries, but some laywomen donors displayed their agency by interviewing candidates and making decisions on the finalists, as is evident in Song anecdotes.¹⁴⁴ Like material goods and monetary resources, ordination certificates were also means by which laywomen could display their dedication and earn religious merit. Furthermore, such one-to-one sponsorship might help set up a close bond between donor and recipient, who could provide a more customized and professional religious support for the sponsor.

Unlike nuns, laywomen were not committed to celibacy. Celibacy “threatened the Confucian order, which placed the family at the center of social control” as Birge argues. Generally speaking, I agree with her that “it was acceptable for women to believe as long as they did not opt out of their social and sexual obligations.”¹⁴⁵ However, when they visited temples, their contact with non-relative men outside the *jia* challenged the Confucian promotion of gender segregation, and this made the justification of women’s religious pursuits more complicated.

As Mark Halperin has noticed, although “women did venture outside the home in their religious quests, . . . writers of funeral inscriptions, however, were loath to refer to these transgressions and mentioned them only to highlight the virtue of women who understood their place and remained in the inner sphere.”¹⁴⁶ In normative biographies, women’s religious pursuits were contextualized in domestic settings, while their religion-related trips outside the *jia* went generally unnoted. Male authors did not include them in the deceased’s honorary dossier, but this does not mean they did not accept such behavior in real life. Their attitudes might have varied depending on the perspective from which they interpreted these activities. On the one hand, women’s visits and patronage at temples could be explained as “inner affairs” that they carried out in the interest of the *jia*, in spite of their physical absence from the inner quarters. This rationale may have justified many men’s tolerance of and occasional escorting women on their religious travels. On the other hand, Song elites expressed concern about the “vulgar religiosity and the emotionality”¹⁴⁷ that went with temple visits, as Francesca Bray’s research on male literati in late imperial China shows. They were suspicious of laywomen’s activities in temples, among which their intermingling with laymen and clergy aroused particular anxiety.

Yiqun Zhou carefully studies the tension between women’s domestic religious responsibilities (ancestor worship) and external religious pursuits in the Ming-Qing period. “In reaction to the flourishing of lay Buddhism and its strong appeal to women . . . a vigorous Confucian discourse on female religious piety developed in late imperial China,” which insisted that the *jia* “always be the central locus of women’s religious experience.”¹⁴⁸ In the Song dynasty, women were attracted to the thriving religious market just like their Ming-Qing descendants. However, unlike Ming-Qing Confucians who boldly expressed their disagreement with laywomen’s religious behavior outside the *jia*, Song elite men did not make explicit their attitudes. It seems Song literati were not bothered by women’s external religious pursuits as much as Ming-Qing authors; very likely they had more flexible and diverse views of the matter.

Song women’s religious behavior outside the *jia* was sometimes denounced by government officials over concerns about local administration and social order. A few local administrators in Fujian, a veritable wonderland of various religions, saw laywomen’s fervent participation in events held at Buddhist monasteries as a travesty and disagreed with their religious conduct. In 1057, when Cai Xiang 蔡襄 was the prefect of Fuzhou 福州, he issued sixteen admonitions to local residents, among

which the eighth one stated, "Women should neither listen to [monks'] teachings nor go to Buddhist monasteries outside of prescribed times."¹⁴⁹ Cai Xiang had no sympathy for Buddhism and criticized Emperor Renzong's patronage.¹⁵⁰ In contrast, his opinion on laywomen's religious practices outside the *jia* seemed mild. According to Cai, laywomen's "timely" visits to temples, presumably on religious holidays, was acceptable. What bothered him was that women went to temples on random days to listen to monks' sermons. The fact that a local administrator addressed such a concern in his moral preaching to local people suggests that women's involvement in monastic events had become too visible and frequent to ignore. It contradicted local officials' expectations of women's appropriate behavior in the outer sphere and posed a serious threat to the proper social order. It appears that Cai's persuasion did not have the effect he had hoped for. Two decades later, Zeng Gong 曾鞏, another Fuzhou prefect, restated Cai's announcement, and even went so far as to "prohibit women from entering temples."¹⁵¹ Zeng Gong's prohibition was more difficult to practice and very likely proved to be another failure after Cai Xiang's.

Cai Xiang's and Zeng Gong's worry was not unique among regional officials who cared about the improvement of local customs in Fujian. One century after Cai Xiang, Zhu Xi was assigned to be the prefect in Zhangzhou 漳州, where he issued a similar official admonition, calling for temples to refrain from "gathering men and women day and night with the excuse of respecting Buddha and preaching sutras."¹⁵² In comparison to his predecessors who discouraged or prevented women from going to temples, Zhu Xi adopted a more pragmatic approach to the problem by addressing the providers of religious services. This solution was consistent with his tolerant attitude toward women's religious inclinations and his insistence on the insusceptibility of women's everyday life to government interference.¹⁵³ Fuzhou in northeastern Fujian and Zhangzhou in southern Fujian lay nearly two hundred miles apart, yet their customary disadvantages discussed by the local officials were quite similar. Women's participation in collective religious events at temples with Buddhist clergy and male peers may well have been popular all over the Fujian circuit.¹⁵⁴

People's enthusiasm for religion in Fujian drove religious events to the street. Beyond the walled monastic compounds, women's participation in local religious celebrations was publicly visible and thus disturbing according to some moralists in the Southern Song. About twenty years after Zhu Xi resigned his Zhangzhou position, one of his favorite

disciples and a native of Zhangzhou, Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159–1223), addressed a personal letter to the prefect, Zhao Rudang 趙汝欽. He vehemently criticized local temples' frequent processions throughout the year, which "men and women gathered to watch."

Husbands have no time to till the land, and wives have no time to weave. They are merely engaged in playing with licentious ghosts (*yingui* 淫鬼). Sons have no time to display filial piety, and younger brothers have no time to display obedience. They merely respect licentious ghosts. . . . It happens everywhere in the city. Moreover, no lower counties do not share the same custom.¹⁵⁵

Chen Chun condemned the community processions organized by local temples under the name of welcoming deities.¹⁵⁶ In comparison to institutionalized Buddhist monasteries and Daoist shrines, temples of popular religions were less disciplined and more locally rooted.¹⁵⁷ In the Zhangzhou territory, massive Buddhist and Daoist temples as well as "no fewer than several hundred" local shrines competed in the active regional religious market, which made attracting substantial sponsors necessary and challenging. While Buddhist and Daoist events were mostly staged inside the temples, the recurring celebrations of local deities were frequently conducted on the street with pomp, targeting local residents, including women. Chen Chun noticed that both men and women were largely involved in these local affairs, at least as curious observers in both cities and countrysides. His primary concern was that people were obsessed with these events and neglected their traditional work. As a side effect, it also led to inappropriate mix of women and men and the deterioration of local custom. Inheriting Zhu Xi's approach and strategy in dealing with women's visit to Buddhist monasteries,¹⁵⁸ he urged the local governor to prohibit the local deity temples from street rally. Zhao Rudang, the recipient of Chen Chun's letter, was an imperial relative who befriended Zhu Xi's school and appreciated his teaching.¹⁵⁹ That explains why Chen Chun solicited his support on rectifying local customs, an enterprise Zhu Xi had been devoted to on the same post.

No extant source shows whether Zhao Rudang followed Chen Chun's advice to regulate local temples. However, Chen Chun's letter informs us many regional officials neither made effort to end religious performances on the street nor discouraged women's participation. He complained, "The former governors were unable to prohibit them boldly.

They even put up curtains and screens to [make a space] to watch [the processions]. They claimed they enjoyed the same happiness as the people, and granted money and wine to [the performers]. It further exacerbated the custom."¹⁶⁰ Chen Chun did not restrain his disappointment while recalling previous local officials' favorable attitudes toward the "disadvantageous custom." Chen Chun did not refer to Zhu Xi at all in this letter. It seems Zhu Xi did not manage to solve this problem when he was on the Zhangzhou post. He mentioned merely one former official, Fang Quan 方銓 (1145–?), had ordered a prohibition posted at the city gate.¹⁶¹ It is unknown whether Fang Quan labeled himself a *daoxue* fellow. But Zhu Xi highly praised his administrative proficiency and once recommended him for promotion.¹⁶² Although *daoxue* had not been recognized by the court in the transition from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, Zhangzhou rose as one of its strongholds at this time. From 1190 to 1212, in the twenty-two-year gap between Zhu Xi's and Zhao Rudang's tenures in Zhangzhou, there came twelve prefects, among whom many had close connections to Zhu Xi and some were even his disciples.¹⁶³ Fang Quan's abnormal behavior differentiated him from the other eleven Zhangzhou prefects, including a few *daoxue* scholars, who interestingly were not bothered by but enjoyed these religious ceremonies. Upholding the classical ideal of gender segregation did not inevitably result in Confucian scholar-officials' opposition to men's and women's intermingling in religious festivals. Even for those who prohibited the religious processions like Fang Quan, the rational was unrecorded and not necessarily related to the concern of gender segregation.

In sum, Fujian officials' attitudes toward women's participation in religious events outside the *jia* were consistently tolerant from the Northern Song to Southern Song, except for few ephemeral and random efforts to regulate it. Even if prohibitions were somewhat practiced for a while, Fujian women's open access to public religious events was not officially forbidden in general and very likely prevailed throughout the Song era. Historians studying women and religion in late imperial China have discussed a great deal of bans that the central and local governments issued to prohibit women from participating in temple events.¹⁶⁴ Compared to the Song predecessors, Ming-Qing officials were more eager to interfere in women's religious life in public domains, although the enforcement of their policies was seldom satisfactory and "beyond the means of late imperial officialdom."¹⁶⁵ Vincent Goossaert argues that the regulation of local religious life became an important arena for the state and elites to negotiate political and cultural authority at the local level

from the seventeenth to nineteenth century. The tension and competition between the court and local society also existed in the Song period, but no source shows it applied to the realm of women's religious life. The central government was not worried about women's visits to temples,¹⁶⁶ leaving it a local customary affair that local administrators were theoretically eligible to intervene in but seldom prohibited in reality.

Some Song elite men, including local officials in Fujian, despite varied intellectual backgrounds, expressed serious concerns about laywomen's violation of the principle of gender separation outside the *jia*, and some even tried to exert administrative authority to discourage women's religious outings. Their strategies varied in accordance with the degree of their tolerance for women's religious activities outside the *jia* and their different assumptions about local government's role in improving local customs. No matter whether they forcefully tried to prevent women from visiting temples, earnestly persuaded women to stay away from temples, admonished temples not to host unisex events, or joined local population in celebrating religious festivals, they must have realized that regulating these active laywomen was not feasible. Their endeavors to suppress temples' attraction to women or women's aspiration for religious events were doomed to fail even if they took effect for a certain time, because laywomen's interest and involvement in monastic activities never faded over the course of the late imperial period, in Fujian or elsewhere.

Buddhist Funeral

Song scholars treated men's and women's religious pursuits differently considering their varied prescribed social roles in Confucian discourse. Men were advised to stay away from religion, while women's religious devotion was normally tolerated; men's visits to temples was unproblematic, while women's involvement in monastic events occasionally provoked moral concerns. Nevertheless, when lay people, men and women alike, extended their religious practices to the ritual field of funerary arrangement, a great number of Confucian scholars voiced their opposition. They vehemently condemned Buddhist funeral rituals, even though they were widely accepted by all classes. As Hsien-huei Liao notes, "Strongly motivated by the perceived need to guard the Confucian orthodoxy against folk contamination and to maintain an orderly society, Song scholars devoted themselves to reform of the uncanonical funeral practices pervasive in their time."¹⁶⁷ They viewed funerary rites as one of the most

fundamental family rituals and promoted them as key to regulating and “Confucianizing” family and society.¹⁶⁸ Running a funeral in either a Buddhist or Confucian manner was not a personal issue but a household affair that involved both men and women and might cause strife among family members who proposed contradictory funeral procedures.

Song scholars noted the popularity of Buddhist funeral practices in Fujian.¹⁶⁹ According to Huang Gan, Buddhism spread widely in Fujian because of the regional lords’ generous sponsorship during the Five Dynasties period. “People living in mountains and beside valleys especially believed in it.” Regarding funerals, they “were devoted loyally to the custom of chanting and praying. Some even burned their parents’ corpses. . . . Should not it be [something] we grieve over?”¹⁷⁰ Fujian Confucians were sad that local people abandoned the ancient rituals, followed a “heterodox teaching,” and violated the principle of filial piety in funeral practice.¹⁷¹ Presumably both men and women were among these “heterodox” sympathizers. Psychological attachment to Buddhism, reinforced by the experience of witnessing or participating in Buddhist funerals, resulted in their commitment to Buddhist funerary ceremonies, which unavoidably led to conflicts if any of their family members proposed an “orthodox” funeral. Hu Yong 胡泳, one of Zhu Xi’s disciples, consulted his teacher on the funeral problem within his family. He wrote, “One should not use Buddhist ways to arrange funerals. However, my mother is insisting on it. If I do not listen to her, I disobey her. If I listen to her, it does not conform to the ritual. I do not know how I should deal with it.”¹⁷² A *daoxue* adherent, the son considered it ritually correct to perform a Confucian funeral ceremony. As a filial son, Hu Yong should obey his mother, but as a righteous scholar, he could not follow her instructions. His dual identities inside and outside the *jia* caused his dilemma, for which his mentor offered a solution: “First explain and persuade her tactfully. If she doesn’t change her mind, you should not disobey her.”¹⁷³ In spite of his assiduous promotion of proper Confucian funeral rituals, Zhu Xi did not expect his student to follow his “orthodox” way unconditionally for the sake of maintaining his moral integrity. He recognized and respected Hu’s mother’s authority in determining the style of funeral. The son was absolutely supposed to subordinate his opinion to the mother’s ultimate authority on this matter, even if the mother refused to accept his ideas. Zhu Xi valued filial piety over the goal of correcting inappropriate family rituals.

Actually Hu Yong was not the only disciple to ask Zhu Xi for strategies to resolve similar dilemmas. In one exchange with Guo Shuyun

郭叔雲, Zhu and Guo discussed a son's filial piety to a Buddhist lay father. Zhu Xi agreed with Guo's proposal that the son should gradually remove the material traces of the father's Buddhist belief three years after his death.¹⁷⁴ In his study of lineage in Ming-Qing China, Timothy Brook addresses the difference between Buddhist funerals and Confucian rites as "the gap between popular and high culture." "This contradiction often manifests itself in terms of a difference between male and female choices, women of the gentry class preferring Buddhist funerals and men objecting to them."¹⁷⁵ It seems to be literati's biased presumption rather than a historical fact.¹⁷⁶ But such a gender-based notion of contrasting men and women in adopting funeral styles did not occur to Song scholars. It was prevalent for both men and women to conduct or demand Buddhist funerals. Compared to elite men in later history, Song Confucians had not essentialized the link between women and religion or come up with the stereotype of laywomen's unfavorable religious roles.

The selection of funeral styles frustrated Zhu Xi and his disciples. When someone asked Zhu Xi what a son should do in case his father/mother left a will about the adoption of Buddhist or Daoist funeral ceremonies, Zhu Xi did not present a direct answer but responded hesitantly by reiterating the difficulty of the problem. On another occasion, someone proposed a similar question. Zhu Xi asked for his attitude. The interlocutor answered that the son must disobey. Zhu Xi did not approve such an uncompromising response, and argued that using Buddhist or Daoist monks for the funeral was a superficial matter and suggested that the son's obedience of the parent's determined will would not bring harm.¹⁷⁷ The participants of the conversations dismissed gender difference, and put mother and father together for indiscriminate discussion. Hsien-huei Liao studies the popularity of Buddhist elements in funerals among Song elite and suggests that "the Song elite's accommodation of folk funeral practices was driven by psychological needs that the emotionally impoverished Confucian rituals could not offer."¹⁷⁸ In Zhu Xi's case, his likely recognition of the shortage of spiritual comfort and condolence provided by Confucian funeral rites in comparison to Buddhist ones might have contributed to his compromise, in addition to his major concern with filial piety.

Zhu Xi was a controversial politician and philosopher in his time. His disciples deified him as a sage whereas many of his contemporaries criticized him as a hypocrite. His determined promotion and high-toned reinterpretation of the ancient Confucian canons gave rise to the stereotyped image of a stubborn and dogmatic moralist among later readers of

his metaphysical and political essays, which has continued to influence modern scholarship. However, the discovery and analysis of his correspondence with disciples, the compassionate epitaphs he composed for laywomen, and his pragmatic official strategies present us with the more realistic and flexible aspects of this neo-Confucian master's life philosophy. Along with his painstaking efforts to propose and propagate strict moral principles, Zhu Xi made compromises in accordance with concrete circumstances and displayed humanity and a willingness to negotiate when dealing with complicated human affairs. This surely contributed to his charisma, which inspired hundreds of followers to devote their lives to transmitting his ideas and striving to achieve his orthodoxy.¹⁷⁹

In Hu Yong's story, what the son could and should do was trying to persuade his mother. This strategy was widely practiced among his *daoxue* fellows although the final results varied case by case. Lin Gongdu 林公度 was another disciple of Zhu Xi.

When his mother was alive, he calmly talked to her, "The prevalence of the Buddha's teaching has harmed the rituals of the ancient kings. How can there be heaven and hell?" The mother said, "I will die without any regrets if you would preserve the rituals." Therefore, after his mother died, the two sons removed all Buddhist elements from the funerary arrangements, and consistently practiced [Confucian] rituals to express their sorrow.¹⁸⁰

This record came from the epitaph of Lin's mother, Ms. Wu. It seems that Ms. Wu was not a Buddhist adherent since the author Huang Gan did not mention her religious pursuits at all in this biography.¹⁸¹ Lin Gongdu's conversation with his mother on Buddhism and Confucianism suggests the popularity of Buddhist funerary custom because even women without a Buddhist identification like Ms. Wu would probably expect a Buddhist funeral.¹⁸² Although the sons would be in charge of Ms. Wu's funeral, they respected her will and consulted her on the style of funeral she expected while she was alive. In contrast to Hu Yong's determined mother, Lin Gongdu's mother agreed to her son's suggestion. The two sons arranged her funeral to display both their filial emotion and their serious commitment to the Confucian way. However, their decision was not appreciated by kinsmen and people in their area. "The criticism from local villagers and lineage relatives came day after day. The condemnation did not begin to stop until Mr. Huian (Zhu Xi) sent [Lin] a letter

to encourage him."¹⁸³ This letter was not preserved, and the content is unknown. But it must have been a powerful source of backup that Lin Gongdu relied on to justify his funeral practice. The decline of local people's criticism indicates they more or less respected Zhu Xi's authority. However, even for these people who at least did not oppose *daoxue*, a funeral without Buddhist elements seemed unusual and inappropriate.¹⁸⁴

In the eyes of Confucian revivalists, managing to carry out a Confucian funeral was extraordinary and merited recording and praise. In one of Liu Kezhuang's epitaphs, he painstakingly notes how a filial son conducted the funeral and sacrifices of his devoted Buddhist mother in accordance with Zhu Xi's manual of *Family Rituals*.¹⁸⁵ Although it is not stated whether the son encountered objections from family members, such a detail, stylistically unnecessary in a commemorative biography, suggests the unusualness of the event and the author's appreciation of the effort.¹⁸⁶ Confucian scholars had to face the dominance of the Buddhist funeral customs across society and the difficulty of conducting orthodox Confucian funerary rites. This explains why Huang Gan had such high regard for Ms. Wu's worthy virtue: "She was born in the mountains, but taught the rites to her sons and was not infatuated with heterodox teachings."¹⁸⁷ No matter how much the enthusiastic Confucian scholars attempted to eliminate Buddhist influence in funerary practices, they recognized women's, especially widowed mothers', authority on scheduling and managing funerals inside the *jia*, the same way they respected fathers.¹⁸⁸ Their inferior position in the domestic mother-son hierarchy resulted in their powerlessness in dissuading mothers from assuming Buddhist funeral. They became anxious and confused about how to deal with strong-minded mothers' opposition, but appreciated more considerate mothers' understanding and support. The experience of motherhood and the affiliated Confucian core value of filial piety helped enhance laywomen's authority and secure the independence of their religious pursuits in a conventionally patrilineal, patriarchal, and patrilocal society.

Confucian scholars' anti-Buddhist persuasion was private and largely involved domestic mother-son intimacy in the Song. Such a mild approach persisted into the later period. However, in the Ming-Qing times, the state's recognition of the orthodoxy of Confucian rituals unprecedentedly empowered scholars and officials in prohibiting people from practicing Buddhist funeral in a publicly visible way. Their opposition to Buddhist funeral practices was incorporated into the composition of family regulations, village contracts, and government decrees.¹⁸⁹ Although the effects were probably unsustainable, laywomen in late

imperial China did encounter more intervention from their family, lineage, local community and government in terms of religious life in comparison to the Song predecessors.



Women and Burial

A tomb is a posthumous residence (*yinzhai* 陰宅) but never a replica of the dead's living dwelling. A corpse goes through miscellaneous funeral ceremonies and is finally placed in an excavated pit to achieve its immortality. Afterward, a symbolic ancestor tablet is erected and worshipped inside the *jia*, sustaining his or her connection with the former living quarters. When that residence falls to ruin, the traces of his or her worldly existence and activities disappear, while the surviving graves, concealed deeply beneath the ground until exposed by modern archaeologists, tell us the missing stories of the living. They could be tomb occupants, their spouses, descendants, relatives, or funeral professionals who were able to have their burial wishes indicated, exchanged, modified, and more or less put into practice at any stage.¹ Each tomb is unique, epitomizing various mortuary rites and customs as well as the participants' diverse burial concerns.

The *jia* provides a lifelong context within which to study women's everyday lives; a tomb, in contrast, represents an extreme end of a woman's life experience. The tombs of Song women offer particularly valuable insights into the gendered norms and beliefs about the connections between life above ground and underneath. Wu Hung's investigation of Chinese tombs' spatiality, materiality, and temporality exemplifies a productive research approach to interpret a tomb as "a spatial construct" and "to uncover the underlying logic of a tomb's design, decoration and furnishing, history and memory, cosmology and religious beliefs."²

To explore Song Fujian women's constructed underground space, this chapter focuses on the structure of the burial chamber itself, the relative position of the corpse, the burial objects inside, and the mural paintings. The four aspects of burial practices offer clues about the attitudes of the relatives and ritual specialists about a woman's place. For it was these contemporaries who made decisions about a tomb's location, construction, interior structure, decoration, coffin, inscription stone, and funerary accessories. Such funerary accessories as clothing were often selected by the tomb occupant herself when alive; hence, they constitute a particularly fruitful avenue for exploring a woman's self-presentations to posterity.

Besides its physical importance in defining a woman's space in the afterlife, a tomb "is a trace of conscious human activity like a text," as Christian de Pee points out, and "its materiality allows a silent juxtaposition of incompatible worlds that the determinate text precludes." It "preserves in its words, and even in its silences, a forgotten space, a prior time, a faint gesture, ancient ways of seeing and feeling," as a text does.³ Therefore, the study of a tomb and burial practices is an experiment in utilizing both textual and material sources to develop new conceptual tools that would illuminate women's lives.⁴

Tomb Structure: From Single Chamber to Multichamber

A great divergence in tomb structures between different areas, especially north and south, in the Song dynasty has been acknowledged by Chinese archaeologists.⁵ According to Qin Dashu's study, tomb structures in the north seem to be quite uniform, while those in the south can be categorized into several regional types, including Fujian style, although they resemble each other to some extent.⁶ These tombs are mainly single-chamber (see Figure 6.1) and parallel double-chamber (see Figure 6.2) structures, but in the early Northern Song, some Fujian tombs continued a Five Dynasties front and rear double-chamber style, and from the middle Southern Song on, parallel triple-chamber and four-chamber stone tombs became more and more popular.⁷

For the people in Fujian, a key shift occurred during the transition from the Northern Song to Southern Song, when both the practice and interpretation of joint burial underwent a significant transformation. In contrast to northern China tombs, parallel multichamber burials (see Figure 6.3) for the conjugal couple gradually replaced single-chamber ones and became the normative joint burial style prevalent in Fujian.

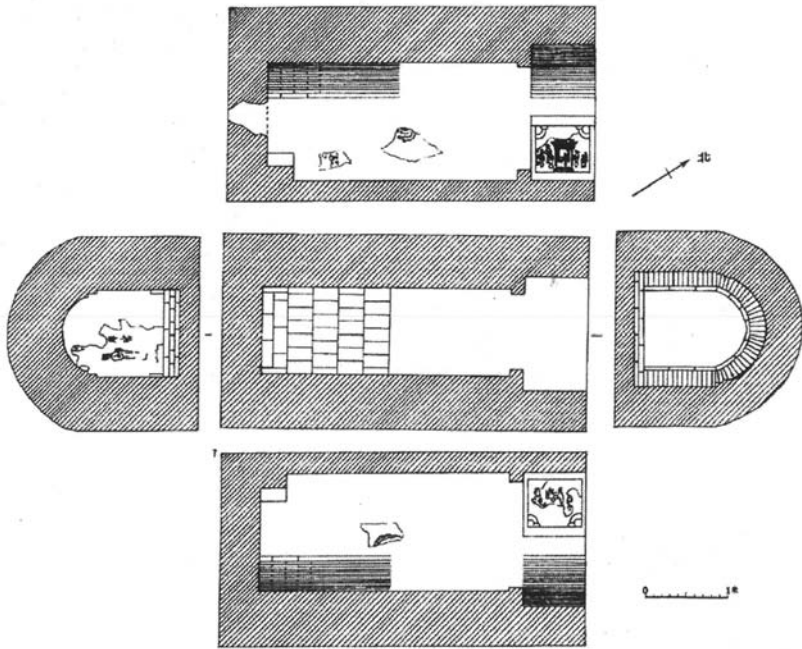


FIGURE 6.1. The Layout of Tomb 23 (Single-Chamber Tomb).

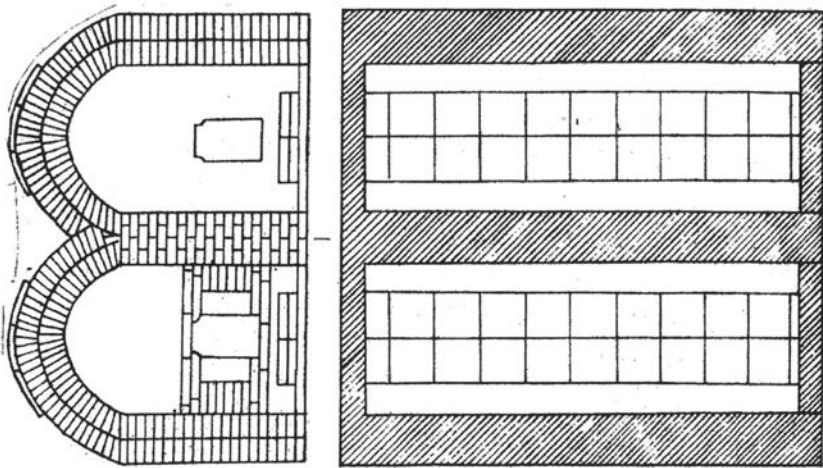


FIGURE 6.2. The Layout of Tomb 25 (Double-Chamber Tomb).

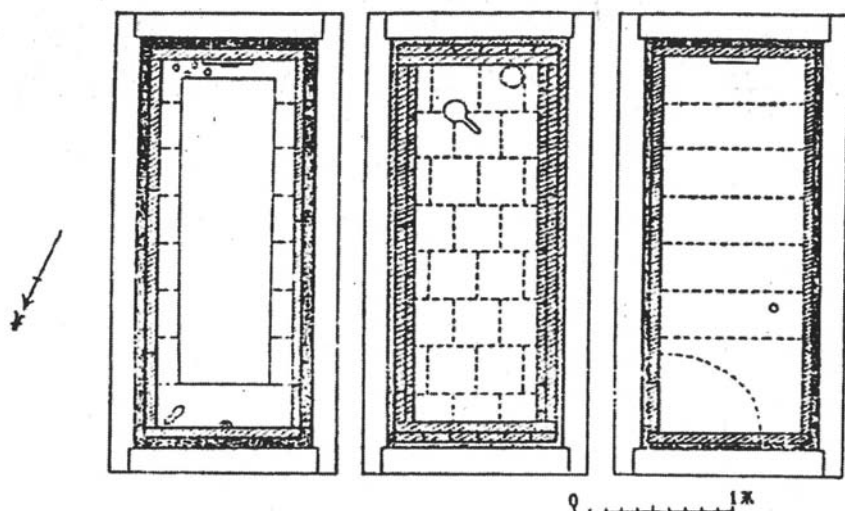


FIGURE 6.3. The Layout of Tomb 8 (Triple-Chamber Tomb).

To investigate the characteristics of Fujian tomb structures, I have collected all the available published and unpublished archeological reports of Song tombs excavated in Fujian⁸ and made a comprehensive list of Song Fujian tomb structures below (see Table 6.1; see also Appendix).⁹ Based on this data, I will reveal the intellectual transition behind the gradual shift from single-chamber tombs to double-chamber ones in burial practices, present the optional construction of passage ways, clarify couples' relative positions in the same pits, and articulate the arrangement of triple-chamber tombs.

The archaeological reports on eighty-two Fujian Song tombs have been examined.¹⁰ This provides us with enough information to show the transition of Fujian tombs from Northern Song to Southern Song, the variations in structure from single-chamber to double-chamber and triple-chamber tombs, and the diverse characteristics of inner chamber designs in different localities, even though all are classified as Fujian style. In Table 6.1, there are nineteen tombs from Fuzhou Prefecture, fifty tombs from Nanjianzhou Prefecture, three tombs from Shaowu Command, eight tombs from Jianzhou Prefecture/Jianning Fu, and two tombs from Quanzhou Prefecture. The majority (about 84 percent) are thus from Fuzhou and Nanjianzhou.¹¹ The relatively concentrated data from the two areas in central Fujian offer abundant opportunities for the study of the regional features of Song tombs and certain aspects of local women's everyday lives.

Table 6.1. List of Song Fujian Tomb Structures

	<i>Location</i>	<i>Occupant</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Size (cm)</i> <i>length ×</i> <i>width × height</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Passageway</i>	<i>Niche</i>	<i>Epitaph/ Land Contract</i>
Fuzhou Prefecture								
1	Fuzhou	Chen Yuanji (South)	1208	276 × 98 × 127	double chamber	0	1	epitaph
		Ms. Zhang (North)	1210	276 × 98 × 127			1	epitaph
2	Fuzhou	unknown	unknown	272 × 100 × ?	double chamber	1	0	
3	Fuzhou	Ms. Wang (West)	1257	248 × 80 × 96	triple chamber	0	1	land contract
		unknown (Middle)	unknown	248 × 80 × 96				
		unknown (East)	unknown	248 × 80 × 96				
4	Fuzhou	Chen Shijiu (West)	1222	248 × 80 × 96	triple chamber	0	1	land contract
		unknown child (Middle)	unknown	104 × 80 × 96				
		unknown	unknown	248 × 80 × 96				
5	Fuzhou	Huang Bangyong	1203	unknown	double chamber	unknown	unknown	joint epitaph
		Ms. Ye	1229	unknown				
6	Fuzhou	unknown (West)	unknown	235 × 83 × 110	double chamber	1	1	
		Ms. Huang (East)	1209	235 × 73 × 110			1	epitaph/land contract
7	Fuzhou	unknown	1078–1085	unknown	single chamber	0	0	land contract
		unknown	unknown	unknown				land contract
8	Fuzhou	Huang Sheng (Right)	1243	294 × 144 × 146	triple chamber	0	0	epitaph/land contract
		Zhao Yujun (Middle)		294 × 144 × 146				
		Ms. Li (Left)	1247	294 × 144 × 146				land contract
9	Fuzhou	unknown (Left)	Southern Song	47 × 39 × 50	double chamber	0	0	land contract
		unknown (Right)	Southern Song	47 × 33 × 50				

continued on next page

Table 6.1. Continued.

	<i>Location</i>	<i>Occupant</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Size (cm)</i> <i>length ×</i> <i>width × height</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Passageway</i>	<i>Niche</i>	<i>Epitaph/ Land Contract</i>
Fuzhou Prefecture (continued)								
10	Fuzhou	Zhu Zhu (Left)	1230	302 × 130 × 170	double chamber	0	1	epitaph
		Ms. Hong (Right)	1227	310 × 130 × 170			1	epitaph
11	Fuzhou	Ms. Chen (Left)	1250	230 × 115 × 115	triple chamber	0	0	epitaph
		Xu Jun (Middle)	1272	230 × 120 × 115				epitaph
		Ms. Zhao (Right)	1287	230 × 115 × 115				epitaph
12	Fuzhou	unknown	Northern Song	470 × 470 × 420	single chamber	0	0	
		unknown	Northern Song					
13	Fuzhou	unknown male (Left)	1235	295 × 155 × 250	double chamber	0	0	
		unknown female (Right)	1235	295 × 155 × 250				
14	Fuzhou	Unknown (West)	Southern Song	235 × 75 × 100	double chamber	0	0	
		Unknown (East)	Southern Song	235 × 75 × 100				
15	Fuzhou	unknown	Early SS	350 × 141 × 200	double chamber	0	0	
		unknown	Early SS	350 × 141 × 200				
16	Minhou	unknown female (Right)	unknown	280 × 102 × 127				
		Mr. Wang (Left)	unknown	340 × 137 × 175	double chamber	0	0	
17	Lianjiang	unknown female (North)	1102–1106	252 × 85 × 110	triple chamber	0	terrace	land contract
		unknown male (Middle)	1102–1106	267 × 85 × 110			terrace	land contract
		unknown female (South)	1102–1106	267 × 85 × 110			terrace	
18	Lianjiang	unknown	unknown	? × 40 × 53	single chamber	0	1	land contract
19	Lianjiang	unknown	unknown	218 × 78 × 105	single chamber	0	1	land contract

Nanjianzhou Prefecture

20	Nanping	unknown male	Early SS	350 × 96 × 112	double chamber	1	1	
		Ms. Wu	Early SS	350 × 96 × 112			1	land contract
21	Nanping	unknown	Middle NS	400 × 88 × 126	double chamber	0	1	
		unknown	Middle NS	400 × 88 × 126			1	
22	Nanping	unknown male(Right)	Early SS	234 × 70 × 168	double chamber	1	2	land contract
		unknown female (Left)	Early SS	234 × 70 × 168			1	
23	Nanping	unknown	Middle NS	452 × 232 × 234	single chamber		0	
24	Youxi	unknown	unknown	398 × 110 × 140	single chamber		0	
25	Youxi	unknown	Northern Song	290 × 100 × 150	double chamber	1	1	
		unknown	Northern Song	290 × 100 × 150			1	
26	Youxi	unknown	unknown	unknown	single chamber		1	
		unknown	unknown	unknown				
27	Youxi	unknown	unknown	395 × 130 × 155	double chamber	1	0	
		unknown	unknown	395 × 130 × 155				
28	Youxi	unknown	unknown	395 × 130 × 155	double chamber	1	0	
		unknown	unknown	395 × 130 × 155				
29	Youxi	Ms. Zhang (Left)	1108	310 × 110 × 107	double chamber	1	12	epitaph
		Wu ? (Right)	1126	310 × 110 × 107			12	epitaph
30	Youxi	unknown	Northern Song	325 × 108 × 115	single chamber	0	12	
31	Youxi	unknown	Southern Song	236 × 72 × 103	single chamber	0	0	
32	Youxi	unknown male (Left)	Northern Song	300 × 125 × 130	double chamber	0	0	
		unknown female (Right)	Northern Song	300 × 110 × 130				
33	Youxi	unknown	Northern Song	330 × 95 × 160	single chamber		0	
34	Youxi	unknown	Northern Song	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	
35	Youxi	unknown	Northern Song	unknown	double chamber	unknown	unknown	
		unknown	Northern Song	unknown				
36	Shaxian	unknown	unknown	390 × 120 × 196	double chamber	0	0	
		unknown	unknown	390 × 120 × 196				

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Table 6.1. Continued.

	<i>Location</i>	<i>Occupant</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Size (cm)</i> <i>length ×</i> <i>width × height</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Passageway</i>	<i>Niche</i>	<i>Epitaph/ Land Contract</i>
37	Shaxian	Lu Wensheng (Left)	1273	310 × 72 × ?	double chamber	0	1	
		Ms. Yu (Right)	1315	310 × 72 × ?		0	1	
38	Shaxian	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	
39	Shaxian	unknown	unknown	290 × 116 × 160	unknown	unknown	unknown	
40	Sanming	unknown	Late NS	unknown	unknown			
41	Sanming	Unknown (Left)	Southern Song	330 × 112 × 147	double chamber	0	0	
		Unknown (Right)	Southern Song	330 × 116 × 147				
42	Shunchang	unknown	unknown	480 × 160 × 130	double chamber	1	0	
		unknown	unknown	480 × 160 × 130				
43	Shunchang	unknown male (Right)	1078–1085	450 × 96 × 160	double chamber	1	1	
		unknown female (Left)	1078–1085	450 × 96 × 160			1	
44	Shunchang	unknown	Northern Song	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	
45	Shunchang	unknown	Northern Song	400 × 136 × 160	single chamber		4	
46	Shunchang	unknown	Northern Song	500 × 143 × 152	single chamber		terrace	
47	Jiangle	unknown	Southern Song	262 × 70 × 80	single chamber		0	
48	Jiangle	unknown	Northern Song	245 × 125 × ?	single chamber		0	
49	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	166 × 86 × ?	double chamber	0	unknown	
		unknown	unknown	166 × 86 × ?		0	unknown	
50	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	260 × 158 × ?	double chamber	0	unknown	
				260 × 158 × ?				
51	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	416 × 200 × ?	single chamber	unknown	unknown	
52	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	unknown	single chamber	unknown	unknown	
53	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	unknown	single chamber	unknown	unknown	

54	Jiangle	unknown	Late NS-SS	370 × 130 × 150	double chamber	0	0	
		unknown		370 × 113 × 150				
55	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	340 × 112 × 134	double chamber	0	1	
		unknown	unknown	340 × 112 × 134			1	
56	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	452 × 200 × ?	single chamber	unknown	unknown	
57	Jiangle	unknown (Left)	unknown	285 × 95 × 103	double chamber	unknown	1	
		unknown (Right)		285 × 86 × 103			1	
58	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	118 × 38 × 50	single chamber	unknown	unknown	
59	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	96 × 42 × ?	single chamber	unknown	unknown	
60	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	unknown	double chamber	unknown	unknown	
		unknown	unknown	unknown		unknown	unknown	
61	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	358 × 79 × 123	double chamber	0	3	
		unknown	unknown	358 × 79 × 123		0	3	
62–69	Jiangle	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	
Shaowu Command								
70	Shaowu	Huang Huan	1226	322 × 162 × 158	single chamber		0	
71	Shaowu	Zhao Shangong (Left)	1217	345 × 139 × 148	double chamber	0	0	epitaph
		Ms. Wu (Right)	1215	350 × 138 × 134				epitaph
72	Taining	unknown	M/L NS	unknown	double chamber	unknown	unknown	
		unknown	M/L NS	unknown				
Jianning Prefecture								
73	Jian'ou	Mo Hui	Early NS	394 × 122 × 162	single chamber		1	
74	Jian'ou	Chen Zelong	Early NS	520 × 134 × ?	single chamber		1	
75	Jian'ou	unknown	Middle NS	368 × 118 × 136	double chamber	0	1	
		unknown		368 × 118 × 136			1	
76	Chong'an	unknown	Middle SS	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	
77	Pucheng	unknown	unknown	350 × 135 × 172	single chamber		0	
78	Pucheng	unknown	M/L NS	unknown	unknown		unknown	

continued on next page

Table 6.1. Continued.

	<i>Location</i>	<i>Occupant</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Size (cm)</i> <i>length ×</i> <i>width × height</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Passageway</i>	<i>Niche</i>	<i>Epitaph/ Land Contract</i>
79	Pucheng	unknown	M/L NS	700 × 200 × 171	single chamber		17	
80	Pucheng	unknown	Southern Song	250 × 110 × 150 250 × 110 × 150	double chamber	0	0	
Quanzhou Prefecture								
81	Nan'an	Mr. Wu Ms. Yu	unknown	276 × 177 × 126 276 × 177 × 126	double chamber	unknown	unknown	epitaph
82	Jinjiang	Ms. Chen	Southern Song	325 × 111 × 195	single chamber	0	0	epitaph

In south China, from the middle Northern Song on, more and more graves took on the double-chamber style.¹² From Table 6.2, we can clearly see how this transformation of tomb types gradually took place in Fujian.

According to Table 6.2, while almost half of all Northern Song tombs belong to the single-chamber tomb type, the other half consists of the double-chamber type, the triple-chamber type, and unknown types. However, in the Southern Song, the majority (about 79 percent) are of the double-chamber and triple-chamber type. These data indicate that during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition, double- and triple-chamber types had replaced the single-chamber style as the most prevalent styles, at least in the Fujian region.

In Fujian Song tombs, all double-chamber and most triple-chamber examples are joint burials for couples; however, single-chamber tombs are not limited to individual burials. Two Northern Song Fuzhou tombs (Tombs 7 and 12) belong to the single-chamber type but accommodate one couple each. The discrepancy raises a question: in what sense does joint burial influence the typology of tombs if both multichamber tombs and single-chamber ones can be occupied by couples? Actually, joint

Table 6.2. Types of Song Fujian Tombs

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Northern Song Tombs		
Single-chamber tombs	11	46
Double-chamber tombs	8	33
Triple-chamber tombs	1	4
Unknown	4	17
Total	24	100
Southern Song Tombs		
Single-chamber tombs	4	17
Double-chamber tombs	15	62
Triple-chamber tombs	4	17
Unknown	1	4
Total	24	100
Undated Song Tombs		
Single-chamber tombs	11	32
Double-chamber tombs	13	38
Unknown	10	30
Total	34	100

burial for couples had already been proposed in the classic *Book of Songs*: “when alive, we stay in different rooms, but when dead, we shall share the same grave pit (*gu ze yi shi, si ze tong xue* 穀則異室，死則同穴).”¹³ According to modern archaeologists’ studies, from the Middle Western Han period on, the “one couple in one pit under one tumulus” structure becomes increasingly popular, replacing other styles and becoming the dominant joint burial mode.¹⁴ Even in the Northern Song and Jin periods, people in north China carried on this tradition when building joint-burial tombs. However, our study of Fujian Song joint-burial tombs in both single-chamber and multichamber styles indicates that during the transition from the Northern Song to Southern Song period, Fujian people’s practice (and presumably interpretation) of joint burial experienced a certain transformation.¹⁵

In Song Fujian joint burials, the single-chamber mode is a simple representation of the traditional “one couple in one pit under one tumulus” structure, while multichamber burials came into being as a variation, gradually became favored and adopted by local people, and finally developed into the principal joint burial style, which would last for centuries into the late imperial period.

Joint Burial: Partition Wall and Passageway

To understand why tomb styles changed in Song Fujian, we must first clarify the typological difference between these single-chamber tombs and multichamber ones. From the Song scholar Sima Guang’s ritual text, the *Notes on the Yi li* by Master Sima (*Sima shi shuyi* 司馬氏書儀), we learn that there are two types of Song tombs: the vertical shaft tomb (*shuxue tukeng mu* 豎穴土坑墓) and the tomb with an underground corridor leading to the cave room or dirt room (*hengxueshi tudong mu* 橫穴式土洞墓).¹⁶ Although the latter type was quite popular in north China during the Northern Song and Jin periods, almost all Fujian Song tombs in Table 6.1, whether single chamber or multichamber, belong to the former category. This method of burial involves digging straight down into the ground to make a pit (*kuang* 壙) in which to place the coffin and then filling the pit with earth. The prevalence of such a “straight down” mode in Song Fujian was determined by its special geographic situation, different from the North China plain.¹⁷

In joint burials, if a couple’s coffins were lowered into one stone- or brick-lined chamber, we call them single-chamber tombs. A double-chamber tomb’s layout, according to Dieter Kuhn, “is characterized by

a doubling of a single tomb and by the simple means of dividing the entire tomb by a wall into two equal sized coffin chambers roofed with a flat vault of stone slabs or with an arched brick vault which could be fashioned in various ways.”¹⁸ The partition wall (*geqiang* 隔牆) separated the two coffin chambers, with a passageway through the partition wall in some double-chamber tombs. A triple-chamber tomb was just an extension of a double-chamber one. Two partition walls instead of one were set up in a grave pit and thus divided the entire tomb into three chambers. From a comparison of single-chamber and multichamber tombs, we see that they differ from each other only in the partition wall. Why, then, did the Song Fujian people modify their single-chamber tomb structure for couples and turn to double-chamber and triple-chamber designs? How did the partition wall function ideologically and practically in joint burials?

Although joint burial had been confirmed as an appropriate burial mode in early China, it was interpreted in different ways and therefore yielded diverse burial practices in ancient times. In an early Confucian classic, *Yi li* 儀禮, Confucius points out the difference between joint burial customs in the states of Lu 魯 and Wei 衛: “The Wei people’s joint burial separates, while the Lu people’s unites.”¹⁹ In his comments to the *Yi li*, Kong Yingda explains why Confucius favored the Lu custom over the Wei:

Separating means putting one object in the outer coffin (*guo* 槨) to segregate two inner coffins (*guan* 棺). [The Wei people] make such an arrangement to clarify that joint burial should resemble a couple’s living situation—men and women must live in segregated places. [However,] the Lu people put two inner coffins together in one outer coffin because they think [a dead couple] are not alive any longer and don’t need to be segregated. The *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing* 詩經) states, “When alive, we stay in different rooms, but when dead, we shall share the same grave.” Therefore, [Confucius] prefers the Lu’s joint burial style.²⁰

From this text, we know that in early joint burial practice, both the Wei and Lu people put a dead couple’s inner and outer coffins in the same chamber. However, the Wei people set up a segregating board in the outer coffin to separate a couple’s inner coffins inside, while the Lu people did not. All Fujian Song tombs listed in Table 6.1 are

simpler than these ancient tombs of Wei and Lu because outer coffins are never used. However, if we look at their brick or stone chambers as ancient outer coffins, then the partition wall in Fujian double-chamber tombs logically resembles a revision of the segregating board in the Wei people's joint burial, while single-chamber tombs for couples look like continuations of the Lu style. In line with Kong's commentary, does the transformation of joint burial from single- to double-chamber styles suggest that Song Fujian people intended to apply the ideology of gender separation to joint burial practice?

A separating object between a husband's and wife's coffins seems to have been a clear symbol for gender segregation in the ancient context, according to Kong's interpretation. However, does such a reading still make sense in the Song dynasty? The two most valuable texts recording Song burial ritual are Sima Guang's *Notes on the Yi li* by Master Sima from the Northern Song period and Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* (*Jia li* 家禮) from the Southern Song period.²¹ Both works provide us with abundant detailed information about the procedure of tomb building and their various structures. Sima Guang was a moralist who strongly emphasized gender segregation in daily life. He devoted an entire special chapter, "miscellaneous proprieties for managing the family" (*jujia zayi* 居家雜儀), to restricting males and females from connecting with each other while at home.²² Yet he offered no recommendation to separate males and females through tomb structure. According to Patricia Ebrey's study of the *Family Rituals*, we know that Zhu Xi admired Sima Guang's work but was unsatisfied with its complexity. Concerned for the moral cultivation of Southern Song society, he modified some popular customs, simplified Sima Guang's provisions, and composed a set of instructions for family rituals that were easy to read and to understand.²³

Zhu Xi was born and spent most of his life in Fujian and was thus quite familiar with Fujian's local customs. If there had been an obvious emphasis on gender segregation in Fujian's burial practice, Zhu Xi would surely have included such a phenomenon in his ritual text. However, although he followed Sima Guang's idea of gender segregation at home, he did not even mention using a partition wall to separate a couple in the underground world. Apart from his *Family Rituals*, Zhu Xi also expressed his ideas about burial ritual in other writings. He once commented on Wei's and Lu's different joint burial practices, but he did not relate the discussion to the idea of gender segregation at all.²⁴ This investigation of Sima Guang's and Zhu Xi's ritual texts suggests that

gender segregation was not intentionally highlighted in tomb structure in the Song and that the partition wall in Song Fujian's double- and triple-chamber tombs should not be interpreted as a strengthened emphasis on gender segregation.

Although shown to be a popular joint burial style by modern archaeological excavations, the double-chamber tomb is seldom mentioned in Song writings. The only comment on this burial mode is found in the *Journal and Miscellany of Su Dongpo* (*Dongpo zhilin* 東坡志林) by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), a famous Northern Song scholar originally from Chengdufu Circuit (*Chengdu fu lu* 成都府路), which is in modern-day Sichuan:

The *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing*) says: “when alive, we stay in different rooms, but when dead, we shall share the same grave pit.” From antiquity down to the present day, those who have died have been buried each in a single room. Only people in Sichuan bury their dead separately in one and the same grave (*tong fen er yi zang* 同墳而異葬). Between the separate burial chambers there are passages. Their height does not reach a man's eyebrow; their width does not allow a man to pass through. . . . The passage is blocked with stones and bricks. Only when [the second partner] has died and is to be buried are the stones and bricks taken away. When my mother died, my father . . . wrote out an epitaph, which says that it is the custom of the people of Shu 蜀 to bury [couples] together in the same grave but in different rooms (*tong long er yi kuang* 同壟而異壙).²⁵

Su Shi then investigated the origin of joint burial and concluded that in antiquity the tradition of burying a couple in the same grave but in different rooms existed. But people did not use passages then. He argued that “this was not what the poet [of the *Book of Songs*] intended with [the proposal to use] ‘the same grave’ (*tongxue* 同穴)! Therefore, the burial customs of the people in Shu are indeed the closest in following [the demand of] the rites!”²⁶ According to Su Shi, joint burial has a tradition stretching back to early times as it fulfills the demand of the classics, but its real meaning had not been realized and practiced until Song Sichuan's ritually authentic burials—constructing parallel grave chambers connected by passageways for married couples. According to

Helga Stahl, “archaeological excavations in recent years have proved that the Sichuanese tomb type praised by Su Shi was popular in Sichuan especially during the Northern Song.”²⁷

However, the archaeological data from Fujian confirm that the orthodox joint burial promoted by Su Shi was not Sichuan’s alone.²⁸ A large number of Song Fujian joint burials consist of parallel grave chambers in the same pit, and passageways are found in at least 25 percent of the Fujian double-chamber tombs.²⁹ Just like earlier scholars’ analysis of the different Wei and Lu burial customs, Su Shi’s appraisal of Sichuan interconnected double-chamber tombs is also based on the interpretation of the “couples sharing the same grave” rule suggested in the *Book of Songs*. According to Su Shi’s understanding, interconnected double-chamber tombs conform to ancient culture because separate chambers keep children from seeing parents’ decayed coffins at the time of the second burial, while passageways guarantee their parents’ unhindered communication in the same site without barrier. Although there is no Song text elaborating on Fujian double-chamber tombs, Su Shi’s interpretation of Sichuanese burials could also be applied to Fujian’s interconnected double-chamber tombs. All Song Fujian double-chamber tombs with passages are divided into two equal chambers, which implies that they were constructed as a whole tomb initially with two interconnected chambers for couples. If we follow Su Shi’s interpretation, this design was intended to ensure the afterlife communication of the couple’s spirits.

Apart from double-chamber tombs with passageways, there are also abundant double-chamber tombs without them.³⁰ Most of them were built at one time and the whole chamber was divided into two parallel equal-sized rooms; however, a few of them, for example Tombs 16 and 71, were set up originally as single-chamber tombs, and later on a parallel chamber was added to and shared a segregation wall with the earlier one. When the chambers in a double-chamber tomb were built at different times, setting up interconnected passages was unrealistic because the work would risk destroying the previously built tomb chamber. However, as for those initially constructed as double-chamber tombs, does the design without passages indicate that the ideology of a couple’s afterlife communication was not accepted by the tomb occupants’ children?

Although I have not found any Song texts promoting double-chamber tombs without passageways so far, a later burial manual written by a Ming scholar, Wang Wenlu 王文祿, provides us with some hints for imagining Song Fujianese views of this style. In his small booklet, *Regulations for Burials* (*Zang du* 葬度), Wang Wenlu emphasizes the

importance of keeping graves waterproof and airtight. He suggests coffins and tombs be built in a certain way to prevent decomposition, and for this reason, he argues that setting up a passageway between the chambers in a double-chamber tomb is very inappropriate:

If a couple is buried in a double-chamber tomb, people break a hole into the [separating] wall. They call it the “Opening of Filial Piety” (*xiaoshun dong* 孝順洞), which allows for the communication of the souls (*hun* 魂). How stupid this is! It damages the outer coffins [i.e. the grave chambers]!³¹

Clearly, interconnected double-chamber tombs were still widely used in the Ming Jiangnan area to ensure couples’ contact in the underground world, just as they had been in Song Fujian. Wang Wenlu criticized this burial type for accelerating tombs’ decomposition.

As it happens, in his *Jia li*, Zhu Xi provided detailed instructions on how to bury coffins in grave pits. His method also aims to preserve coffins as much as possible and, moreover, would not be possible in the construction of double-chamber tombs with interconnected passages. Zhu Xi suggested that after lowering the coffin into the grave, people first add the inner and outer covers for the cement liner, then fill the grave pit with cement and soil and gradually pound it.³² This hermetic protection method could only be applied to sealed tomb chambers. Theoretically speaking, double-chamber tombs without passages, even if their constructors’ burial methods differed from Zhu Xi’s, should be preserved better than those with passages, since the second burial would not accelerate the first buried corpse’s decomposition.³³ Both textual and material sources indicate that building a double-chamber tomb without a connecting passage for a dead couple was very possibly based on the pragmatic consideration of keeping the coffins and bodies from decaying (*buxiu* 不朽), a fundamental goal of tomb construction articulated in many epitaphs.

In any case, double-chamber tombs with connecting passages facilitating dead couples’ afterlife communication and those without passages, which presumably aimed at the tombs’ protection, coexist in the same areas, and they should both be viewed as part of local burial customs. Roughly speaking, double-chamber tombs for a couple, with or without passages, could both be understood to “share the same grave pit” (*tongxue* 同穴), which conforms to the *Book of Songs*’ proposal; the view that passages ensuring a dead couple’s communication were adopted as an

authentic way to fulfill the ancient classics' requirement is more likely to be the personal interpretation of Su Shi and others. The discrepancy between these two kinds of double-chamber tombs does not derive from opposing versions of gender ideology regarding a deceased couple's separate or joint underground space. Local people chose either of them for their dead relatives, depending on their specific expectations of a tomb's function.

From Inner/Outer to Left/Right

For double-chamber tombs, besides the interior structural design, the husband's and wife's relative position is another gendered issue discussed by Song elite men. The Northern Song scholar Cheng Yi 程頤 was the author of an essay on burial, in which he gave instructions on how to arrange grave pits. Although a complete version of his *Discussions of Burials* (*Zang shuo* 葬說) is no longer available, fortunately his statement on couples' burial position has been preserved through Zhu Xi's quotation:

In Mr. Yichuan's (Cheng Yi) burial method, it is said that husband and wife should be settled down in their [proper] position in the grave pit. When seated in a living room, male is in the east and female in the west; when lying in inner chambers, male is outside and female inside; when in a graveyard, the tomb is located in the north; when in the grave pit, their heads are both located in the north. [In the grave pit,] there is only the difference between left and right, but no inner and outer separation. . . . [I] comment: [According to the chapter on] a wedding ceremony [in the *Yi li*], the groom's bed is located in the east with his feet facing north. It is about the positions of [a couple's] lying seats. There is no inner and outer separation [in the context].³⁴

According to Cheng Yi's statement in Zhu Xi's quotation, inner/outer conceptions, which penetrate almost every detail of Song women's daily life, become totally meaningless in the underground world. Zhu Xi agreed with Cheng, except that Zhu thought there was no inner and outer segregation even in the inner chambers, based on his understanding of the *Yi li*. It seems that Song neo-Confucian scholars already realized and accepted that the idealized gender segregation of inner and outer

could not be applied to the afterlife because the contexts of mundane society did not exist below.

Replacing the inner/outer concept, left and right became an objective indication of male's and female's relative status in burial. Like the inner/outer concept, left/right was also endowed with ideological value when gender construction was at stake. In early Confucian ritual classics, male and female positions are defined as left or right, depending on context. The gender connotation of these physical locations is variously interpreted by later scholars.³⁵ Although the "male/outer, female/inner" conception was accepted as orthodox ideology throughout the imperial period in China, a fixed stipulation of "male = left, female = right" (or "male = right, female = left") never came into being.³⁶ No further gender meaning about a dead couple's left/right position is explored in the above text. Zhu Xi did not suggest or promote a ritually appropriate idea of a couple's locations in a tomb's physical layout, in spite of the fact that the quotation is taken from a personal letter, in which he thoroughly addressed his disciple Guo Shuyun's 郭叔雲 confusion about miscellaneous funerary details. There seems to be no way to trace gender hierarchy here except to note its seeming absence. Nevertheless, Zhu Xi did give thought to this left/right matter, as is evident in the record of his conversation with two neo-Confucian activists:

Yaoqing (Li Tangzi 李唐咨) asked [Zhu Xi] about the position of husband and wife in joint burial, "When I buried my late wife, I only reserved one chamber on the east [for myself]. I did not investigate the ritual." Anqing (Chen Chun 陳淳) said, "the way of earth respects right (*didao zunyou* 地道尊右). Probably men should be located on the right." [Zhu Xi] said, "Sacrifice prioritizes the west. It is appropriate to conform to it in terms of burial."³⁷

Li, a local celebrity of Zhangzhou, admired Zhu's ritual knowledge and consulted him on the position of a couple in a tomb. Although an erudite scholar appreciated by Zhu Xi, he admitted he did not consider ritual propriety when he had the two-chamber tomb constructed for him and his deceased wife.³⁸ Li, very likely representing most contemporaries, did not view it necessary to examine the ritual meaning of wife's and husband's positions in a tomb layout as well as the implied gender hierarchy. A dead couple's left or right positions were not determined

in either ideology or burial practice. Chen Chun was Zhu's dedicated follower, while at the same time Li's son-in-law. He was unsure about the correct husband/wife position in burial arrangement. Without referring to any Confucian canons or commentaries, he suggested the "male/right, female/left" style to his father-in-law and mentor on the basis of a general rule of valuing right over left. His uncertainty indicates the lack of a universal principle or even discussion on this matter in classical literature and existing neo-Confucian discourse, which was testified by Master Zhu Xi, who did not cite any Confucian scholarship either. Zhu Xi argued that the husband should be placed in the west, in accordance with the higher status of this direction in funeral sacrifice. The "west/male, east/female" idea complicates the relative position of a dead couple. From the standpoint of the person who sacrifices, such an arrangement coincides with the principle of "male/left, female/right." But from the deceased's perspective, it on the contrary is a "female/left, male/right" layout, taking into account the head is pointing north, in conformity with funerary ritual.³⁹ Zhu Xi considered west/east instead of left/right a possible means to indicate husband's superiority, but he did not write it into the *Family Rituals*, which he expected to circulate as a practical reference book. He did not even introduce it to some of his disciples, as the earlier letter to Guo Shuyun has shown. It seems he did not intend to publicize the "west/male, east/female" principle, which had no solid textual foundation and went beyond contemporaries' scope of burial concern. Zhu Xi was never a quixotic fighter. His compromise and silence on this matter indicates people of his time generally ignored the connection between gender hierarchy and a dead couple's relative position, in spite of their vastly varied burial practices. Even when his ritual ideas became the orthodox sources that everyday life drew upon in Ming and Qing society, a standard rule prescribing deceased husband's and wife's legitimate positions did not take shape.⁴⁰

Besides Song textual material, archaeological excavations also demonstrate that a dead couple's relative position is not fixed at all in the Song Fujian area. Limited by two elements, severe decomposition or disturbance of tombs, and the incompleteness of archaeological reports, it is only possible to know a couple's left/right positions for eleven (about 31 percent) of the identified thirty-six double-chamber tombs listed in Table 6.1.⁴¹ The archaeological reports do suggest that in burial practice, a couple's relative position in the underground world is quite flexible, which conforms to the phenomenon that there is no unified argument

on the arrangement of a dead couple's relative position in Song elite's discourse.⁴² Compared with Song scholars' emphasis on men's and women's proper position in life, couples' position below the ground is seldom elaborated. The orthodox gender ideology in everyday life vanished and did not accompany male or female subjects into death. Rigid regulations give way to diverse practices; concepts of harmony and communication, in some cases, displace those of segregation and hierarchy.

The Problem of One Man, Many Wives

Among Song Fujian joint burials, triple-chamber tombs exist as an extension of double-chamber tombs.⁴³ The normal typology for triple-chamber tombs is one husband in the middle, one wife on his left, and the other one on his right. Neither "inner/outer" nor "left/right" gender conception works in such a context. In my understanding, the placing of a male between his two wives might be a symbol of his central position in a family's hierarchy; however, a more important issue here is that his central location is to guarantee that he and either female next to him constitute a joint burial for a couple. Archaeological excavations suggest that constructing triple-chamber tombs for one husband plus two wives was not an unpopular practice in the Song Fuzhou area, but Song scholars' ideas about this kind of joint burial were somewhat diverse.⁴⁴ Zhu Xi's collected shorter works preserve a communication with Li Hui 李輝 on this topic; their discussion begins with a quotation of Zhang Zai's 張載 argument:

Mr. Hengqu (Zhang Zai) states, "Joint burial and joint sacrifice are very rational. But when [we] talk about [joint burial], there should be only one [wife] buried [with the husband]. . . . However, as for burial and sacrifice, although they are put in one grave pit and enjoy the same sacrificial table, how may one room accommodating two wives be considerate of human feelings? Thinking about this problem in terms of duty, it would be proper to bury a husband together with his first wife and build a separate tomb for the second wife at another place." Hui, I myself have read Mr. Cheng's *Sacrificial Rituals* (*Ji yi* 祭儀). [Mr. Cheng] said, "[a dead man] should be sacrificed to with his first formal wife. If the descendant who manages the sacrifice was born by the second wife, [the dead man] should be sacrificed to together with the second wife."⁴⁵

Li Hui then stated that he doubted Cheng Yi's view and was confused about whether a dead man should be buried and sacrificed to with his formal wife or the second one. In response to Li Hui's question, Zhu Xi pointed out that he did not agree with Cheng Yi on this subject:

I am afraid Mr. Cheng's statement is wrong. It is declared by the *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 that formal mothers should all be buried and sacrificed to together with [the deceased father] no matter whether they are the first or the second.⁴⁶

The above is Li Hui's record of his discussion with Zhu Xi on the issue of a couple's joint burial. In Zhu Xi's individual collection, there is a conclusive comment on this record by Zhu Xi following Li Hui's text:

The right positions of a husband and wife are like a huge heaven and an infinite earth. There is essential disparity between them. . . . Their afterlife sacrifice and burial is not equivalent to their living situation. Mr. Hengqu's statement seems to explicate [a couple's relationship] too much. It is appropriate to just follow the Tang people's view. Furthermore, the fact that the first wife has no son while the second wife has a son might make the situation more complicated and the descendants uneasy [if people accept Mr. Cheng's idea]. As for burial alone, not all couples are buried together today. Someone build graves for second wives. Of course this is all right.⁴⁷

Zhu Xi refers to the Tang custom of burying one husband and multiple wives together to justify his personal opinion, which contradicts his neo-Confucian predecessors. However, the archaeological study of Tang joint burial reveals its real condition was much more complicated than what Zhu Xi cites from the *Tang huiyao*. Throughout the Tang, what mode was ritually correct for joint burial was under debate and subject to various interpretations, and it gave rise to different practices.⁴⁸ Nor was there a universal view of appropriate joint burial style in the Song, as the conversation between Zhu Xi and Li Hui shows. Among these Song neo-Confucian scholars, Zhu Xi's ideology is surprisingly the most flexible. He frankly stated his disapproval of Cheng Yi's rigid assumption of joint burial. He preferred a joint burial for a husband and all his formal wives, while he also felt comfortable constructing a double-chamber tomb for a

husband and his first wife while arranging another individual tomb for the second wife. He attempted to reconcile both reason and emotion on the joint burial issue and accepted contemporaries' divergent arrangements. In comparison to Zhang Zai and Cheng Yi, whose standpoints coincided with the Tang aristocrats who invested their family fame in preserving ancient rituals, Zhu Xi's view of ritual and custom was more pragmatic and appealing. That is why Li Hui reached such a conclusion: "If one wants to deal with this problem conforming to human emotions (*ren qing* 人情), he has to follow Mr. [Zhu Xi]'s answer."⁴⁹

Actually, Song textual evidence confirms that some Southern Song neo-Confucian scholars followed Zhu Xi's preference in practice. For example, Liu Zai 劉宰 (1165–1239) reburied his former wife after he remarried. At that time, he wrote her a funeral essay, in which he stated that "the left chamber is your eternal final place, and I will keep the middle and right chambers empty until I die and am buried with you together."⁵⁰ This arrangement of triple-chamber tomb style apparently conformed to Zhu Xi's promotion of joint burial of a husband and multiple wives.

In Zhu Xi's opinion, a dead couple's "afterlife sacrifice and burial are not equivalent to their living situation," and the concept of a couple's underground space is not as clearly defined as that of their living space. Zhu Xi's arguments on the spatial arrangement of a couple's afterlife are far fewer than his comments on a living couple's segregation. In his *Family Rituals*, Zhu Xi presented a great concern for sexual segregation in mundane life, but he did not give any elaborate or concentrated discussion of a dead couple's space. Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* aimed at correcting people's inappropriate conduct, but his recognition of contemporaries' multiple popular joint burial practices made his guidelines on the arrangement of joint burials unnecessary. His attitude toward the arrangement of joint burial was based more on human feelings than other scholars' opinions. Therefore, his disregard of a couple's afterlife spatial arrangements in his ritual manual may actually have reflected his respect for the descendants' personal choices.⁵¹

Song scholars, including those mentioned in the quotations above, all inherited the classical ideology of joint burial, according to which "when alive, a couple stay in different rooms, but when dead, they shall share the same grave pit." There was little divergence among Song scholars in the understanding of the part pertaining to the living; however, their interpretations of the part on the afterlife differed to some extent. Song scholars' disagreement on whether a husband should be buried

together with his first wife or second wife or both indicated that there was no uniform joint burial practice at that time. This lack of agreement provided contemporaries with the leeway to choose whatever joint burial style they wanted. The coexistence of Song double- and triple-chamber tombs found in Fujian is in accordance with Song writers' diverse views on a couple's intimacy in the afterlife world.

Funerary Accessories from Seven Multichamber Tombs

Putting funerary accessories in tombs as a popular funerary practice in China can be traced to the ancient period. Funerary accessories in China are called *mingqi* 冥器/明器, which literally means "objects for the after-life."⁵² Throughout the imperial era, *mingqi* underwent great changes accompanying continuous social transitions, and even within a single period they varied from tomb to tomb, depending on the tomb occupant's age, gender, class, economic ability, the tomb manager's expectations, local customs, and so on. In this way, on the one hand, the *mingqi* set in each tomb should have been unique because every dead person was different, and on the other hand, some of them might have resembled each other because the tomb occupants were contemporaries from the same areas and had parallel social identities.

Ideally speaking, in modern archeological studies, the *mingqi* should be regarded as a complex carrying abundant information about the tomb occupant and his period. In fact, "the multivocality of objects in burial contexts has long been recognized" by archaeologists, and the study of "the juxtaposition of miscellaneous objects in a shared ritual time and space" is recommended by cultural historians such as Christian de Pee.⁵³ As Bettina Arnold and Nancy Wicker argue, "just as death is a transformative process for the deceased, the life history of an item of material culture can be transformed in the course of the mortuary ritual."⁵⁴ *Mingqi* are the objects that accomplished the transformation and became valuable for mapping gender in mortuary contexts. Therefore, to explore Song women's space underground, an exhaustive study of *mingqi* is necessary.

Chinese material artifacts are more likely to have been gendered during transmission and consumption than in production.⁵⁵ Their gender identities are almost invisible in textual sources. Fortunately, *mingqi* from tombs provide opportunities for the comparison of women's and men's things. Contextualized in underground space, the intimate connection between humans and objects becomes conspicuous, and comprehensive

lists of women's and men's funeral accessories make the comparison of women's and men's things possible.

Among the multiple typologies of Song Fujian tombs, double- and triple-chamber tombs provide parallel contexts for the direct comparison of women's and men's *mingqi*.⁵⁶ Among the forty-one Fujian Song double- and triple-chamber tombs, I have chosen some undamaged examples to represent the difference between women's and men's funerary accessories (see Table 6.3).

In the seven double- and triple-chamber tombs, the similarity in the funerary accessories of husband and wife becomes quite clear. In

Table 6.3. Comparison of Accessories

Tomb 6 Fuzhou (Middle Southern Song)				
Material	West (<i>unknown husband</i>)	Number	East (Ms. Huang ?-1209)	Number
jade			loop with double holes	1
bone	hairpin	1		
iron	cattle	1	cattle	1
copper	coins	26	coins	7
stone	statues	23	statues	20
			stone inscription	1
porcelain	plate	1		
	bowl	1	bowl	unknown
	jar	2	jar	unknown
unknown			land contract	1
Tomb 10 Fuzhou (Late Southern Song)				
Material	Left (Zhu Zhu)	Number	Right (Ms. Hong)	Number
stone	statues	20	statues	24
	stone inscription	2	stone inscription	1
pottery			multi-mouth jar	1
			small jar with lid	4
	jar lid	12		
porcelain	cup	2		
copper			mirror	1
	coins	25	coins	24
iron	cattle	1		
			pagoda	1

continued on next page

Table 6.3. Continued

Tomb 17 Lianjiang (Late Northern Song)				
Material	Middle (unknown husband)	Number	North (unknown wife)	Number
iron	scissors	1	scissors	1
	cattle	1	cattle	1
	ding vessel	1		
copper	coins	18	coins	33
	mirror	1		
stone	statues	more than 20	statues	about 10
	ink stone	1		
pottery	jar	1	small jar	1
	land contract	1	land contract	1
porcelain	bowl	1	jar	1
Tomb 21 Nanping (Middle Northern Song)				
Material	Left (unknown husband)	Number	Right (unknown wife)	Number
pottery	jar (big)	6	jar (small)	5
	pot (big)	2	pot (small)	2
	dragon jar	2	dragon jar	2
	jar with string	1		
	yi vessel	1	yi vessel	1
	grinding bowl (big)	1	grinding bowl (small)	1
			bowl	2
			handless small cup	4
	oil lamp (big)		oil lamp (small)	1
			stove	1
	firepan	1		
	pail (big)	1	pail (small)	1
			rice steamer	1
	yu vessel	2	yu vessel	2
porcelain	male standing statues	1	female standing statues	1
	male dog statues	1	female dog statues	1
	rooster statues	1	hen statues	1
	dish (big)	1	dish (small)	1
copper	coins		coins	
Tomb 22 Nanping (Early Southern Song)				
Material	Right (unknown husband)	Number	Left (unknown wife)	Number
pottery	dragon jar	3		
	jar	9		

	handless small cup	1		
	stove	1		
	granary	1		
porcelain	bowl	1		
	jar	1	jar	1
	small jar	2		
iron	scissors	1		
	land contract	1		
copper	mirror	1	mirror	2
stone	ink stone	1		
plastic			hairpin	1

Tomb 36 Shaxian

<i>Material</i>	<i>Left (unknown husband)</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Right (unknown wife)</i>	<i>Number</i>
pottery	flagon	1		
	jar	1		
	statues	8		
porcelain	teapot	1		
	teacup	?		
			bowl	2
			plate	1
			dish	6
stone	ink stone	1		
copper			mirror	2

Tomb 43 Shunchang (Late Northern Song)

<i>Material</i>	<i>Right (unknown husband)</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Left (unknown wife)</i>	<i>Number</i>
pottery	pot	1	pot	1
	stove	1		
			dragon pot	3
porcelain	bowl	2	bowl	3
	tea bowl	3	tea bowl	6
			tea bowl tray	5
			cup	2
			bottle	2
			small jar	1
			granary	1
	lid	1		
copper			mirror	1
	coins	more than 30		
iron	pan	1		

Tomb 6, apart from Ms. Huang's 黃氏 one jade loop, one stone inscription, and one underground land contract (*maidiquan* 買地券) and the husband's one bone hairpin, their funerary accessories are almost the same in terms of categories. They both have iron cattle, stone statues, and porcelain, which match each other in number, except that the husband has many more copper coins than Ms. Huang. In Tomb 10, Zhu Zhu's 朱著 and Ms. Hong's 洪氏 funerary accessories are rather similar to each other in type and in number. Like the owners of Tomb 6, they were also accompanied by stone statues, stone inscriptions, porcelain, pottery, copper coins, and iron cattle or pagodas. A slight difference between Zhu Zhu and Ms. Hong is that the wife has one iron mirror while the husband does not. In Tomb 17, other than the husband's one copper mirror and single ink stone, the husband and wife both have iron scissors, cattle, copper coins, stone statues, pottery, and porcelain in common, although the number of copper coins the husband has is twice that of his wife's. In Tomb 21, funerary accessories are mostly everyday utensils made of pottery. A list of these suggests that the wife's funerary accessories are probably a smaller set generally matching her husband's. Furthermore, the pottery statues in this tomb are also classified as male and female. In Tomb 22, in contrast to the husband's abundant cache of pottery, porcelain, iron, copper, and stone objects, the wife's funerary accessories are fairly scarce. One porcelain jar, two copper mirrors, and one glass hairpin are all she has. In Tomb 36, the husband's and the wife's funerary accessories have nothing in common. The husband has pottery utensils, statues, and ink stone, while the wife has porcelain dishes and copper mirrors. In Tomb 43, the wife has many more pottery and porcelain utensils than the husband; however, the husband has more than thirty coins while the wife has none. It seems that the above seven tombs stand for seven unique cases because they vary from each other in the categories and number of husbands' and wives' funerary accessories. They do not suggest any rules for the arrangement of male and female funerary accessories.

Among these tombs, the only clearly gender-defined one is Tomb 21. In this tomb, the wife's funerary accessories were intentionally made smaller to match the husband's *mingqi* set, and male and female human and animal statues were put separately in the husband's and wife's chambers. However, this kind of strict gender segregation should not be viewed as standard. It is most likely related to the tomb occupants' or designers' particular views and circumstances because we cannot find any similar cases in dozens of other Song Fujian tombs.

In these sample cases, with the exception of Tomb 21, there are almost no specific male or female objects. In one tomb, there might be something that a husband has but a wife does not have, or a wife has but a husband does not have. However, these objects are not exclusively male or female funerary accessories; we might find similar material belonging to females or males in other tombs. For example, one hairpin was found in the husband's chamber of Tomb 6, while another one was found belonging to the wife of Tomb 22. The copper mirror in Tomb 10 belongs to the wife, while the one in Tomb 17 is located in the husband's chamber. The ink stone is the only exception. In these tombs, ink stones only appear in male chambers. They might thus be viewed as male objects, as they are a symbol of identity for the male literati. However, ink stones were also found in female tomb chambers outside Fujian in neighboring Jiangxi, and these are mostly "Phoenix-style ink stones (鳳型硯)."⁵⁷ In this way, although an ink stone might appear to be a distinctive gendered object among all the funerary accessories, it could not be perceived as a male or female object. Although a sign of elite literacy, it is not necessarily found in all literati tombs.

Besides the difference between the categories of funerary accessories in parallel chambers of one tomb, the difference between the numbers of male and female funerary accessories is also noticeable, but the latter is not determined by gender hierarchy. For example, in Tomb 22 the husband has many more funerary accessories than the wife, but in Tomb 43 the situation is exactly the opposite. Similarly, with concrete funerary accessories such as copper coins, it is obvious that there is no certain rule for men to have more than women. In Tomb 6, the husband has many more coins than the wife, and in Tomb 10, the husband and wife enjoy almost the same number of coins, while in Tomb 17, the coins in the wife's chamber are twice those in the husband's.

Therefore, the list of funerary accessory categories and numbers in adjacent chambers of one tomb cannot be generalized as a parallel comparison of male and female objects. The collections of funerary accessories vary from each other because the persons arranging funerary accessories have various expectations for these objects. In a double-chamber tomb, if a tomb occupant died when his or her spouse was still alive, the funerary accessories were very likely selected by the partner who expected to stay next to the deceased and his or her objects after she or he passed away. But if a tomb occupant outlived his or her spouse, the descendants (or relatives, if descendants were not available or too young) would determine what and how many funerary goods were appropriate to

express their filial piety and sorrow. In addition to the timing of death, the expectations for funerary accessories might have been influenced by orthodox gender ideology, local customs, and/or tomb occupants' living situations, habits, and desires, so that the disposition of funerary accessories presents great diversity in Song Fujian tombs.

A double- or triple-chamber tomb provides a particular context for the comparison of a husband's and a wife's funerary accessories. This kind of comparison cannot be generalized into a difference between male and female objects, but it does reveal that in terms of categories, men's and women's funerary accessories resemble each other a great deal. Normally, there are two types of funerary accessories in Song Fujian tombs without regard to gender: the objects used by the tomb occupants while alive, and grave goods made for the burial. Hairpins, mirrors, coins, and porcelain utensils belong to the former type, while stone statues, pottery utensils, iron cattle, and pagodas fit in the latter one. Objects from the former category were once scattered in mundane boudoirs, kitchens, living rooms, and markets, and they were later buried underground, accompanying the corpses to demonstrate their owners' earthly identities. Among the latter type of objects, there are also some that are imitations of earthly things: stone statues appear as tomb occupants' attendants, and pottery pieces are miniature copies of daily kitchen utensils. They function as media bridging their owner's everyday life and his or her afterlife world. Although attendants are divided into male and female and kitchens are identified as a female place in mundane society, stone statues do not follow gender segregation, and kitchen utensils are broadly used in both male and female chambers in the underground space. The overall similarity between male and female funerary accessories below outweighs their difference in individual cases.

Theoretically speaking, the underground place would have been much easier than mundane spaces to construct according to ideal gender ideology because there are no human activities challenging the spatial order below. However, the practice of funerary accessory collections indicates that this ultimate space is not as clearly segregated by gender as it could be. An obscure gender sense in Song Fujian double- and triple-chamber tombs becomes perceptible through the comparison of funerary accessories. Actually, according to archaeologists devoted to Song Fujian tomb excavation, tombs like those listed in Table 6.3 are only a small part of the whole range of Song burial sites.⁵⁸ Most excavated Song tombs are small dirt pit tombs accommodating a few pottery utensils as funerary accessories. Obviously, these tombs belong to the vast stratum of lower-class commoners. It is easy to tell tomb occupants' class identity

but impossible to distinguish their gender through funerary accessories. Thus it is almost impossible to tell chamber occupants' gender through funerary accessories alone in most Song Fujian tombs.⁵⁹

Three Late Southern Song Tombs

The above seven cases of undamaged tombs provide complete sets of data for the comparison of husbands' and wives' funerary accessories. However, among those double- or triple-chamber tombs and single-chamber tombs that are damaged, there are still some well-preserved chambers whose study can further our understanding of male and female things. Table 6.4 summarizes the contents of three such tomb chambers.

Table 6.4. Comparison of Individuals

Tomb 8 Fuzhou Huang Sheng (1227–1243)

<i>Material</i>	<i>Item</i>
silk and hemp	clothing
	quilt
	ribbon
	perfume bag
	pouch
lacquer	powder puff
	cosmetic box
	powder box
	ruler
	bobbin
bamboo and wood	mirror stand
	prayer beads
	male statue
	pick
	scraper
palm fiber	bamboo branch
	round fan
	brush
horn	comb
	fine-toothed comb
gold and silver	pendant
	incense box
	hairpin
	butterfly

continued on next page

Table 6.4. Continued.

Tomb 8 Fuzhou Huang Sheng (1227–1243) (continued)	
<i>Material</i>	<i>Item</i>
copper and iron	small bowl
	jar with lid
	mirror
	coins
stone	cattle
	stone inscription
brick	land contract
powder	cosmetic powder
Tomb 11 Fuzhou Xu Jun (1223–1272)	
<i>Material</i>	<i>Item</i>
silk	powder puff
	cosmetic box
	prayer beads
	comb
lacquer	fine-toothed comb
	brush pen
	box
	cup with pad
wood	pot
	chopsticks
	chopstick pot
	spoon
gold and silver	mirror
	coins
	cattle
	scissors
copper and iron	ruler
	letter weight
	ink stone
	stone inscription
stone	ink brick
	cosmetic powder
ink	
powder	
Tomb 70 Shaowu Huang Huan (1147–1226)	
<i>Material</i>	<i>Item</i>
gauze	kerchief
lacquer	plate
	mirror case

bamboo and wood	cup with pad
	bowl
	comb
	fine-toothed comb
	round fan
	brush pen
gold and silver	tablet
	bamboo rod
	gold-plated cup
	residue cup
	box with cover
	two-double square case
	box with feet
	cosmetic powder case
	round box with cover
	small cup
	bottle
	pot with lid
copper and iron	ladle
	spoon
	scoop
	coins
	mirror
	coins
porcelain	stove
	scissors
	bowl
	ink stone
stone	stone inscription
	ink brick
ink	

Both Tomb 8 and Tomb 11, located in Fuzhou, contain three chambers and belong to the same late Southern Song period. Two tomb occupants, Huang Sheng 黃昇 and Xu Jun 許峻, are from wealthy official families. The former is the first wife buried in the right chamber beside her husband Zhao Yujun 趙與駿 in Tomb 8, and the latter is the husband situated in the middle chamber of Tomb 11. Although their partners' chambers are severely damaged, their own have fortunately been preserved intact. Therefore, the comparison of Huang Sheng's and Xu Jun's funerary accessories provides us a good example of the difference between female and male funerary accessories in Fuzhou official families in the late Southern Song period.

The most impressive category in Huang Sheng's funerary accessories consists of her substantial silk clothing. There are no clothing collections in such great quantity found in the tombs of other Song Fujianese, male or female.⁶⁰ According to Huang Sheng's stone inscription, she died at the age of seventeen, just one year after her marriage. These clothes probably made up her dowry, which in the Song was considered women's personal property. Objects belonging to a woman who died young might have been thought inauspicious, and thus were not kept by her relatives. Hence, this collection of clothing first displayed her honor during her transfer from her natal family to marital family, and soon afterward it accompanied her into the eternal world underground. There might be a big collection of clothing in Xu Jun's tomb chamber, but we cannot find any related records in his archaeological report. However, considering Huang Sheng's early death, any difference between the numbers of Huang Sheng's and Xu Jun's clothes should not be viewed as a difference between female and male funerary accessories.

Among funerary accessories, clothing is the most fragile. Thus there are few descriptions of clothing in the archaeological reports of Song tombs. Fortunately, the investigation of related textual records provides us with enough material to go further on the issue of clothing as funerary accessories. A Northern Song official, Song Qi 宋祁, left a will in which he expressed his expectations for funerary accessories:

When I die, please arrange my funeral according to the economic situation of our family. Dress me with clean clothing, including cloak, yarn hat, and cotton shoes. . . . My tomb chamber should be just big enough to accommodate the coffin and *mingqi*. Put two bottles of water and two jars of wine on the left, and two boxes of rice and wheat on the right. Put in one court suit, one set of casual clothes, and matching shoes. Put my biography on the left and inscription on the right. Then cover my tomb with dirt. Make [my tomb] simple and thrifty. Do not put golden or copper accessories in my tomb.⁶¹

In this essay, Song Qi declared that he was frugal, and he ordered his descendants to arrange a simple funeral in accordance with his will. Among his expected funerary accessories, he paid the most attention to clothing. A complete set of garments from head to feet was the first funerary accessory he mentioned, and further on, he specified the other two sets that would be accompanying him below. Golden and copper

accessories, statues, and household utensils, which frequently appeared in Song tombs, he deliberately omitted to maintain his frugal reputation, but several sets of clothing were scheduled to be stored in his final resting place.

Like Song Qi, many Song women also arranged for their funerary accessories when they were still alive. They did not leave detailed wills as Song Qi did,⁶² but there are abundant texts recording the preparation of funerary accessories, especially clothing, in Song women's epitaphs, which demonstrates their certain expectations for burial. Ms. Shen Derou 沈德柔 "arranged for funerary accessories (*lianju* 斂具) when she was sick. Clothing and bedclothes were all well prepared."⁶³ When Ms. Liang 梁氏 was ready to be buried, her maidservants told her children that "she required four sets of clothing for four seasons."⁶⁴ When Ms. Jiang 蔣氏 was sick, "her relatives presented her with a splendid dress decorated with pearls as *lianju*; however, she refused, and changed it for a common dress."⁶⁵ When Ms. Tang 湯氏 was ready to die, she "showed [her two daughters-in-law] the clothing and quilt that she had prepared, and said, 'when I die, do not replace these with others.'"⁶⁶ When Ms. Zhao 趙氏 "was sick to the point of death, she took a bath, and dressed in a simple new coat. She went to her mother-in-law, saying, 'I deserve the punishment of death. I should not dress like this to see my father-in-law below. But the world of the afterlife is different from the mundane one. Luxurious accessories are not necessary there.'"⁶⁷ Literally, *lianju* means funerary accessories, just as *mingqi* 明器 does. However, in the context of these Song epitaphs, *lianju* is mainly *yiqin* 衣衾—clothing and bedclothes—just one category of *mingqi*. Both men's and women's special attention to clothing in their funeral arrangements indicates that Song people cared about their appearance in the afterlife, regardless of gender. Of course, narratives that make a point of describing how women prepared their funerary clothing in Song epitaphs suggest in doing so that their conduct was not typical. (Others, for instance, may have chosen much more expensive or much more showy burial garments.) However, since epitaphs aimed to eulogize dead people's virtue, the above records should be understood as conveying their elite male authors' approval of these women's independence in deciding on funerary accessories.⁶⁸ Thus for Song women, as clothing was definitely their private property, the freedom that they enjoyed in deciding on funerary clothing allowed them to express their personal desire and present their agency.

Aside from clothing, Huang Sheng had more decorative accessories than Xu Jun did. Silk perfume bag, pouch, golden and silver pendant,

incense box, hairpin, and butterfly are all objects used to adorn Huang Sheng while she was alive.⁶⁹ In Xu Jun's tomb chamber, there are no such ornaments. It seems that women were more closely associated with decorative accessories than men in Song wealthy elite families. However, this difference between decoration accessories cannot be used to prove that women paid more attention to appearance than men in the Song period because abundant cosmetic accessories are found in both Huang Sheng's and Xu Jun's tomb chambers. Cosmetic boxes, powder puffs, cosmetic powders, combs, fine-toothed combs, and mirrors were sent off with them for continued use by their owners. These toiletry articles were consumed both by women and men, even if women may have enjoyed more personal ornamentation than men. Both personal ornaments and cosmetic accessories are objects that belonged to tomb occupants while they were alive.⁷⁰ Therefore, the difference between these products in Huang Sheng's and Xu Jun's tomb chambers reflects their common concern for appearance and varied aesthetic attitudes toward female and male costume.

Tomb 70 is a single-chamber tomb built in middle Southern Song Jiangle County 將樂 for a male official—Huang Huan 黃渙. Although it is located in the northwest of Fujian, far away from the Fuzhou location of Tombs 8 and 11, the funerary accessories in this tomb show a remarkable similarity to the two Fuzhou tombs. Huang Huan's clothing was already decomposed when the tomb was excavated. However, a large collection of cosmetic accessories is well preserved and demonstrates the tomb occupant's past opulence as equal to anything that Huang Sheng and Xu Jun ever had. A lacquer mirror case, wooden comb, fine-toothed comb, silver two-double square case, cosmetic powder case, and copper mirror indicate the importance of appearance for the tomb occupant in the mundane and afterlife worlds. Round bamboo fans appear to be a popular accessory style favored by both males and females in Fujian wealthy elite families because Huang Sheng in Fuzhou was also found holding a similar fan.

Although cosmetic accessories are a prevalent category in the three tomb occupants' funerary accessories, writing equipment was only found in the two males' tomb chambers. Brush pen, iron ruler, copper letter weight, ink stone, and ink block were found in Xu Jun's tomb chamber, while similar brush pen, ink stone, and ink block were found in Huang Huan's tomb. Both Xu Jun and Huang Huan were officials, and the writing equipment in their tomb chambers constitutes a cultural symbol demonstrating their male elite background. Ideally speaking, Huang

Sheng should have been excluded from this male-exclusive elite community, although she was a member of two elite families. Stationery must have appeared in the inner chambers of many Song elite women, like Huang Sheng's, because many were educated and literate⁷¹; however, in their resting place, these products normally were not available, probably because their male relatives who arranged the funerary ceremonies would not allow such objects to cast doubt upon the tomb occupants' ideal womanly virtue.

It would seem that in the context of the underground space, writing equipment became a distinctly gendered object, in spite of its consumption almost regardless of gender in everyday life. However, this conclusion is challenged by case studies of funerary accessories in the following women's tombs outside of Fujian. Ms. Qiang 強氏 was a Fujian woman, but she was buried in Henan 河南, where her sons resided. She died during the late Northern Song period. In her tomb, there are two kinds of writing equipment: brush rack and ink stone.⁷² In another late Northern Song tomb in Anhui Hefei 安徽合肥, the buried couple both have such equipment. In the husband's (Ma Shaoting 馬紹庭) chamber, there are a block of ink and an ink stone, while in the wife's (Ms. Lü 呂氏) chamber, a box was found holding a block of ink and five writing brushes, an ink stone, and an ink stone box.⁷³ We have no way of telling the reasons why these articles were put in the two women's tomb chambers. It might have been related to the occupants' personal will or the patrons' special concern. In any case, these examples are exceptional among Song women's tombs. Thus, it is still safe to assume that writing equipment was gendered to a greater extent in the underground world than it was in daily life in the Song.

As I have stated, *mingqi* consists of a combination of the objects consumed by tomb occupants while they were alive and those made especially for the dead. Contrary to the situation in the double- and triple-chamber tombs listed in Table 6.3, in the Table 6.4 triple-chamber tombs few funerary accessories belong to the latter category. Except for a wooden male statue, an iron ox, and a brick underground land contract in Huang Sheng's tomb chamber, an iron ox in Xu Jun's, and an iron stove in Huang Huan's, all the funerary accessories in these three tomb chambers are objects they used in their daily life. The materials of these funerary accessories are mostly high-quality silk, lacquer, bamboo, wood, horn, golden, silver, and copper. However, the funerary accessories from Table 6.3 tombs are generally made of pottery, porcelain, iron, and stone. Moreover, the three tomb occupants in Table 6.4 have detailed

biographies recorded in stone inscriptions, while most tomb occupants' names in Table 6.3 are unknown. Prominent class hierarchy in economic, political, and cultural identities among these tomb occupants is clearly reflected through the contrast between those exquisite and expensive funerary accessories and other simple and cheap ones.

The comparison of funerary accessories in Fujian Song tombs provides some clues to the tomb occupants' gender and class identities. Gender identity of funerary accessories was ambiguous in commoners' tombs, where grave goods are mostly unisex objects created and on sale at funeral *mingqi* markets.⁷⁴ Few patrons managed to make a purposeful contrast between male and female *mingqi*. However, in the tombs of rich elite men and their spouses, funerary accessories are typically objects that the tomb occupants had once used in daily life. These objects represent their affluent everyday life and their common concern for appearance in the afterlife. On the one hand, they commanded enough economic resources to guarantee their valuable underground funerary accessories, which indicated their higher class status. On the other hand, their consciousness of *mingqi* as a form of cultural capital endowed their tombs with more gendered sense than commoners' because writing equipment frequently appeared in male elites' tomb chambers as an idealized cultural and gendered icon.

Mural Tombs

The mural tomb was a popular style in North China during the Northern Song and Jin period. It has appeared in many excavations, expanding from Henan, Hebei, and north Shanxi to Shaanxi. In South China, however, this tomb style existed only in Youxi 尤溪, a small Fujian county. There are twelve mural tombs in the fifty Song tombs excavated in Nanjian Prefecture in Table 6.1. Ten of these are located in Youxi, accounting for all the Youxi tombs listed in Table 6.1. Besides the ten Youxi tombs, the other two are from Nanping 南平 and Sanming 三明, respectively. This tomb style did not permeate the rest of Fujian Circuit, probably because the foundation of this local visual tradition lay in Youxi County's specific social, economic, and cultural circumstances. In my investigation of Fujian Song tombs, Fujian can generally be viewed as a single geocultural unit—*Min* 閩—as it has been identified in China's cultural landscape,⁷⁵ while at the same time it consisted of localities with their own differing local cultures. The current database of archaeological reports on Song Fujian tombs does not support an exhaustive exami-

nation of varying local characteristics and thus cannot contribute to clarifying Song Fujian's geocultural map. However, the narrowly defined Youxi mural tomb tradition provides us with an example on the basis of which to apprehend the underlying geocultural diversity.

Youxi was under the administration of Nanjianzhou 南劍州. The crucial intra-circuit waterway that connected Quanzhou 泉州 and Jianyang 建陽 ran through the county and rendered it prosperous in inland trade. The local products of tea and silver mining also added to its assets.⁷⁶ Furthermore, this county was the birthplace of Zhu Xi, who was first educated there and whose neo-Confucian teachings were propagated there.⁷⁷ Thus Youxi in the Song was a culturally sophisticated economic center. Tomb mural production was unusually popular in this highly circumscribed geocultural unit. Although the reasons for this phenomenon are still unknown, this unique artistic legacy provides us with precious visual materials other than colorful funerary accessories that help us to understand gender in the world of Song Fujian tombs.

There is no way to use these tomb murals' stylistic variations to retrace their specific contexts.⁷⁸ Therefore, considering painting style cannot contribute to our study of gender (whether the tomb occupants' or the patrons') in Song Youxi tombs. My discussion thus focuses on the contents of Youxi tomb murals. Lack of accompanying inscriptional material makes the identities of most of the mural tomb occupants unknown, and we have already seen that it is almost impossible to tell tomb occupants' gender purely through simple funerary accessories. Therefore, in order to clarify the gender issue in mural tombs, I have to rely on those double-chamber tombs designed for couples. Tombs 25, 27, 28, 29, and 32 are the five Youxi double-chamber tombs decorated with murals.

The murals of Tomb 25 are probably the most sophisticated. Unfortunately, only the left chamber of this double-chamber tomb is painted with murals or was ever used, so it does not provide a complete basis for a comparison. This tomb is dated to the middle Northern Song period, based on funerary accessories. The murals in the left chamber are pictorially complicated although they were severely damaged. On the left wall are painted four immortals standing on clouds, one tiger, several figures in mountains, one building, and one arched gate. The right wall is damaged, and only two partial and two complete figures, one tomb guardian, and one storehouse remain (see Figure 6.4). On the rear wall is a building roof with a bird above and a valance and two partial figures below. There is no obviously gendered information among



FIGURE 6.4. Drawing of a Mural Painting of Human Figures and House Structures in Tomb 25.

these fragmented images, so the gender of the left chamber occupant is hard to know.

The archaeological reports of Tombs 27 and 28 are not clear or complete. It seems that on the east wall of one chamber are depictions of a maidservant, hunting, chess play, and a *Xu Yun, Yihai* 徐芸乙亥 text,⁷⁹ while the west wall of another chamber is decorated with landscapes, buildings, dragons, phoenixes, tigers, officials, maidservants, and a *Zhang Shi, Ren* 章氏人× note. Obviously, the former chamber belongs to a male, Xu Yun, while the latter's owner is a female, Ms. Zhang. The subjects of these murals are the scenes of tomb occupants' daily life, a heavenly afterlife, and auspicious animals. There is no apparent contrast between the murals located in the male and female chambers. As symbols of male and female, dragons and phoenixes appear in the female chamber together. Male officials and female maidens could also stand next to each other in the female chamber. Idealized gender segregation is not practiced in such an underground context. Therefore, these murals in separate male and female chambers seem to be interchangeable, and they would not cause any gender confusion if they changed places. The only exception might be the hunting picture in Xu Yun's chamber. Hunting is an exercise and entertainment representing men's physical power, while at the same time symbolizing peaceful life in mundane society. Therefore, on the one hand, it might have been a masculine mural subject, while on the other hand, it might be a popular auspicious subject depicted on murals favored by Song Youxi people regardless of gender. Unfortunately, without other supporting evidence, whether it could appear in a female chamber is still unknowable.

Tomb 29 belongs to the parents of the official Wu Tuyi 吳土逸. The husband's tomb chamber has neither murals nor statues. In contrast, within the wife's chamber, on each of the facing walls are painted guardians and six male statues in niches. According to the epitaphs, we know that the husband died when Wu Tuyi was little, and the wife survived long enough to see Wu grow up and become an official. When she died, the son arranged for her tomb chamber's decoration, made two stone inscriptions for the parents separately, and put his father's in the other tomb chamber through the passageway connecting his mother's and father's chambers. The two tomb chambers were constructed in the same style and size when the husband was buried. In the husband's chamber, there are also twelve vacant niches originally prepared for statues. It seems that this tomb style was somewhat popular in Song Youxi,⁸⁰ and the subsequent decoration of figure murals and statues was

taken for granted to complete the whole construction process. It is quite possible that the husband's tomb chamber was not decorated with murals or statues because of his poor economic situation, while the wife's was finally completed thanks to her son's achievement. In this case, the tomb murals for the husband and wife were designed in the same way initially. For a couple, one's occupancy of tomb murals and the other's deficiency is not a gender issue. The difference between the tomb murals of the husband and wife here is more likely to be determined by financial, artistic, and other resources available to the tomb's patrons at the respective times of burial, but not by gender.

The murals in Tomb 32 are the best preserved among these Youxi double-chamber tomb murals. In the left chamber, on the rear wall is painted the chamber occupant's bedroom. In this inner quarter, there is a bed with a red valance (see Figure 6.5). Quilt and porcelain pillow are



FIGURE 6.5. Rear Wall in the Left Chamber of Tomb 32 (Drawing).

put on the bed, and a screen decorated with four watercolor landscape pictures stands behind it. In front of the bed are two standing maidservants holding something. On the left wall are two groups of figures. In one group, there is a seated man leaning on a desk on which books and writing equipment are displayed. Around him are five male servants and a horse. The other group consists of at least sixteen civil and military officers executing a greeting ceremony. The murals on the right wall are nearly invisible because the pigment on most figures has faded. On the rear wall in the right chamber is a bedroom scene almost identical to the one in the left chamber (see Figure 6.6). On the right wall is depicted a noble woman surrounded by several maidservants and a row of guardians and civil and military officers.

In these two tomb chambers, the subjects of the murals on the rear walls are identical—a bedroom—and this consistent subject is rep-

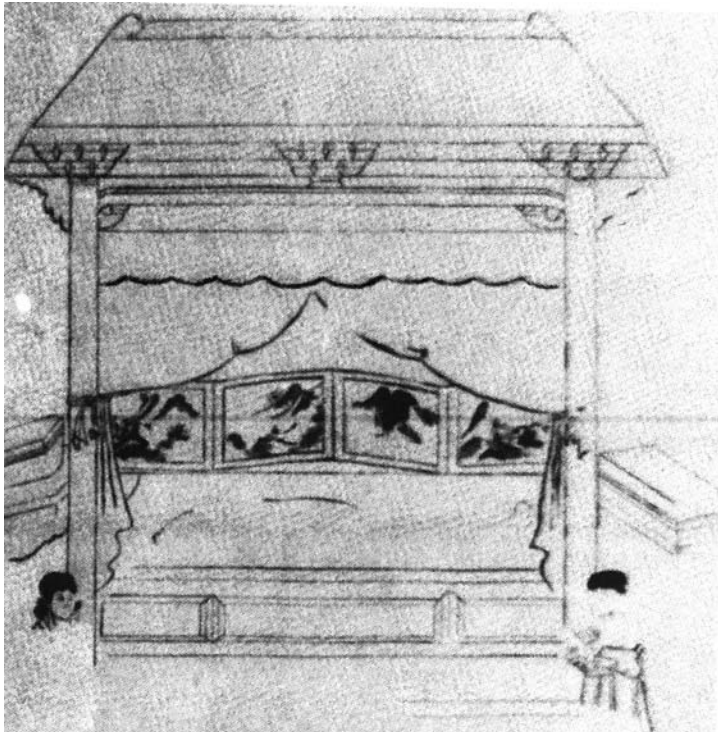


FIGURE 6.6. Rear Wall in the Right Chamber of Tomb 32 (Drawing).

resented through its central object, the bed. Valance and screen are attachments decorating the bed, quilt and pillow are bedclothes, and maidservants are supposed to attend the person lying in bed. The bed is well displayed as a pivotal object in the bedroom scene, while the principal figure, the individual who lies in bed, is missing from the mural. Actually, this missing person is precisely the chamber occupant lying in front of this wall. Therefore, an inner chamber bedroom protected by auspicious objects⁸¹ painted on the rear wall becomes the tomb occupant's ultimate residence regardless of the occupant's gender.⁸² Elaborate beds and decent beddings that wealthy families were able to afford were very likely available inside these tomb occupants' *jias*, as the mural tombs' intricate structures and decoration have indicated. A couple shared a bedroom that was placed in the inner quarter at night. During the day, it was identified as a woman's space that a gentleman should abstain from. Nevertheless, the worldly distinctions between day/night and inner/outer were blurred in the afterlife. Therefore, unlike the bedrooms that the tomb occupants used in real life, the visualization of bedrooms in mural tombs lacked gendered implications.⁸³ It became one of the popular motifs that local artisans drew upon to represent an ideal underground space that tomb occupants and their relatives pictured (see Figure 6.7).

A tomb chamber below is a person's ultimate resting place, whereas even in this underground context, several man-made places are created and defined by murals. In Tomb 32, besides the bedrooms on two rear walls, murals on two side walls in the two parallel chambers represent the chamber owners' daily life. The man leaning on the desk and the noble woman in the chair are definitely the couple buried here. The objects in the husband's scene indicate that the husband left home, rode a horse followed by his servants, and then took a break, enjoying reading and writing on the journey. Although the background of the wife's scene is unclear based on the rough archaeological report, she certainly could not have taken pleasure in freedom and entertainment outside as freely as her husband did.⁸⁴ Generally speaking, the subjects such as riding, reading, and writing are not appropriate to represent Song women's typical daily life in the underground world.⁸⁵ Thus in the context of Tomb 32, these murals depicting the couple are clearly gendered and actually set up a contrast between the two parallel chambers, which is rather different from the situation of the mural tombs we have already seen, where the sense of gender is faint.

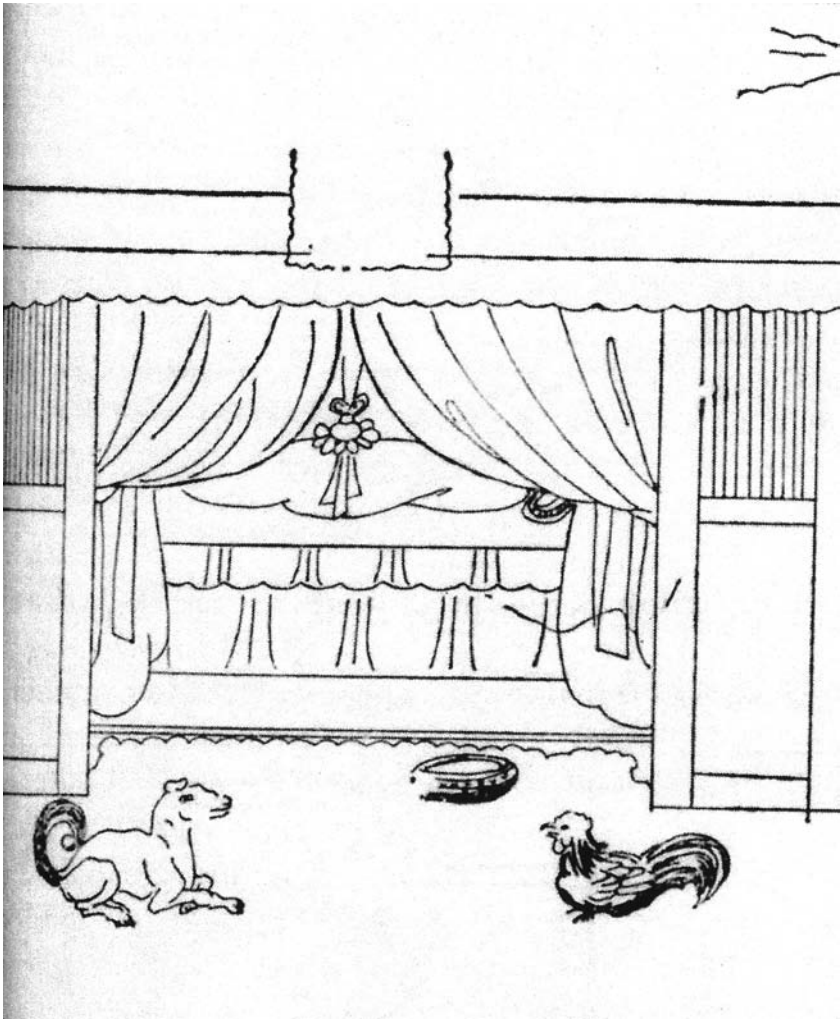


FIGURE 6.7. Drawing of a Mural Painting of a Bedroom in Tomb 30.

Next to the tomb occupants' images are dozens of civil and military officers and guardians. Of course, these figures are not a reflection of the dead couple's daily life because neither stone inscriptions nor *maidiquan* were excavated from this tomb, as we would expect in the case of officials. They are most likely immortals protecting the tomb occupants in

the afterlife. Although in the daily life scenes the husband is followed by male servants and the wife is surrounded by maidservants, these male guardians and officers appear in the two chambers' murals simultaneously. It seems that in Tomb 32, gender segregation is not universally applied to all the scenes.

Ideally speaking, mural tombs grant a suitable context to understand gender in the underground world because images can provide much more information about gender than mere objects like funerary accessories can. Tomb murals are direct depictions of various persons, their activities, and their backgrounds. Limited by the poor preservation of these Song Youxi mural tombs, the conclusions drawn from the comparison of tomb murals in couples' parallel tomb chambers are not as productive as they might otherwise be. Nevertheless, these murals offer us a unique perspective from which to observe gender through the visual arts. Their subjects can be categorized into three groups—human figures, auspicious symbols, and general structures. Human figures include tomb occupants, civil and military officers and clerks, servants and maidservants, guards and attendants, and so on. Tomb occupants' images absolutely appear in their own chambers. On the other hand, other figures exist in either chamber or both of them, regardless of gender. Thus in tomb murals without tomb occupants' images, human figures' images are interchangeable between the two chambers without any gender difference. As for tomb murals with their occupants' images, whether or not the two owners might be switched depends on whether or not their activities and settings are gendered. There might have been a broad database of scenes among Song Youxi tomb mural workshops to represent these owners' daily life. What proportion of the scenes in this database was gendered is a question without an answer, and the archaeological reports do not provide us enough examples to explore this problem in detail. Hopefully, future archaeological fieldwork in Youxi will contribute to our understanding of this gender issue.

The second group consists of all kinds of auspicious animals and icons. These might have had gendered meanings in the contemporary mundane world, but they were used to guard tombs equally regardless of the occupants' gender. The third group consists of a range of structures. Within a Song household, all or most structures are gendered. However, in Song Youxi's underground space, the comparison of structures presented in the murals in the parallel chambers of couples is impractical because most related images were badly damaged. The only exception is the bedroom painting. This was a trendy mural subject

for rear walls in Song Youxi, extensively accepted by both male and female. The bedroom was interpreted as a feminized place in everyday life but viewed as people's ultimate underground place without any gender discrimination. In any case, although the visual materials preserved in Song Youxi tombs are imperfect, I have found more common ground than dissimilarity between the mural contents in the separate chambers of wives and husbands.

Conclusion

When women's physical bodies were relocated to the underground world, they reached their ultimate spatial destination—tombs. Although abundant material details of women's daily life were duplicated and represented in the afterlife, many objects' ideological implications were lost in transition. Orthodox standards regulating women's mundane life, such as the separation of inner and outer, were no longer enforced in the underground context.

Attendant to the transition from the Northern Song to the Southern Song, joint burial became the dominant burial practice in Fujian district. From the middle Northern Song on, double-chamber and triple-chamber tombs gradually outnumbered single-chamber ones. The popularity of multichamber tombs conformed to the ancient Confucian expectation for joint burial. Generally speaking, a couple's corpses were placed in parallel and equal-size chambers, and their relative position was not subject to any specific norm. In some cases, passages were built in partition walls to guarantee the communication of dead couples' spirits. The varied burial arrangements reflected people's diversified concerns and choices in the practice of joint burial. Furthermore, Confucian moralists accepted and interpreted local joint burial practices with flexibility, in contrast to their enthusiastic promotion of gender segregation among the living.

The mortuary context makes the comparison of men's and women's objects feasible, as it is easy to identify the ownership of funerary accessories in separated tomb chambers. The result shows that in commoners' tombs, gender concern is almost indiscernible, as both men and women consumed homogeneous *mingqi* produced at local markets. In contrast, funerary accessories in upper-class individuals' tombs are mostly objects they had once owned and used. However, the categories of these objects do not reveal great gender divergence even when their style, pattern, and decoration disclose their male and female owners' genders.

The study of tomb murals, tomb structures, and funerary accessories all suggest that gender distinction did not figure as a major concern in Song people's arrangement of and expectation for burials. Gender hierarchy in life was not carried over to the afterlife, and women's place in the afterlife was not a reflection of the hierarchies on earth but a new construction determined by local conditions as well as preferences of the individuals and families concerned.

My research focuses on the collection, comparison, and interpretation of material sources excavated from Song Fujian tombs and funerary literature created by Song neo-Confucian scholars. The study of the individual tomb occupants is left out of the picture given the present shape of the data. Among the at least 128 tomb occupants of these 82 tombs, we only know the burial years of 23 (18 percent), and death years of even fewer, through the epitaphs and land contracts recorded in archaeological reports and modern historians' research. Among the seven well-preserved and comparable multichamber tombs, only the couple from Tomb 10 provides us accurate accounts about their ages and burial years. As Dorothy Ko states, "any historical study of women and gender should be class-, locale-, and age-specific."⁸⁶ The study of burial goods has demonstrated the disparity of the financial capacity of their female occupants' households in spite of the lack of textual sources. However, the insufficiency of personal biographies makes it difficult to correlate the descendants' gender concerns in tomb arrangement with the life experiences of the deceased in these Song Fujian cases. The age of the deceased women might have mattered in the underground world as it did in social life. Furthermore, the temporal order of a couple's death might also have caused a difference in funerary furnishings due to changes in the descendants' political and economic situations. Future case studies of local burials full of excavated textual sources would allow us to explore the relationship between gender and burial in Song China in finer texture and with greater precision.

Epilogue

In Song society, women were active in all spheres of life, as is evident in the case of Fujian. Natives and sojourners in Fujian left a variety of written records, which bring to light the conspicuous visibility of women in the local community and on the road. As detailed in this book, women in Fujian have shown to have crossed the gates of their *jia* and forged contacts with outsiders with surprising ease and frequency. In contrast to women's subordination in didactic texts, Song women in real life enjoyed a considerable degree of agency and autonomy, implicit or explicit, in their communication and interaction with agents outside the *jia*, official and unofficial alike.

Even elite women in Song Fujian were more mobile than scholars have previously assumed. Belying great divergence in class and social identities, the everyday lives of women from all walks of life were characterized by substantial physical and social mobility. Witnessing and coping with such women constituted an essential part of contemporary men's everyday lives. Elite men questioned, tolerated, accepted, appreciated, praised, or promoted women's movement outside the *jia*, in accordance with their varied standpoints and views of women. Even prestigious writers of prescriptive literature experienced frustration while dealing with the conspicuous gap between ideology and reality. They had to make compromises, which interestingly resulted in contradictory opinions about women in different generic writings under the name of the same author.

Generally speaking, the experiences of Fujian women outlined in this book were applicable across the empire. Nevertheless, the distinct geocultural environment in Fujian must have endowed their lives with local colors. For example, the rise of Jianyang as the national printing center may have helped increase literacy among local women; the arrival of imperial refugees may have introduced the metropolitan style of sedan chairs to women in Fuzhou and Quanzhou; infanticide in the inland districts resulted in the unusual flow of abducted female laborers from advanced economic zones to underdeveloped territories; the prevalence of hot spring bathing in Fuzhou, Quanzhou, and Tingzhou may have developed into a new fashion of social life that women enjoyed; the extreme proliferation of religions may have yielded more pious women in Fujian than in other places; the popularity of mural tombs in Youxi may have inspired local women's interest in visualizing the ideal afterlife.

Some of these indigenous features left clues in elite men's narratives, whereas others are merely conjectures we could make but have no way to confirm due to the lack of statistical data. In comparison to men, women were normally more locally based. How did women perceive their own local identities? When localism gradually became a prevalent trend in the Song, was there an enhanced consciousness of it among women? As much as we are curious about the answers, these subjects are not addressed in either elite men's accounts or extant Song women's literatures. However, Fujian women's intensive involvement in and commitment to the local community encourages me to surmise that women's local self-consciousness, likely something they took for granted, had a deep influence on their everyday life experiences. But unfortunately we are no longer able to reconstruct the concept of "local" in a Song woman's mentality, which may have been significantly different from a man's.

In the long three centuries of Song history, women's lives must have changed over time. Beverly Bossler's recent important book, *Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity* (2013), impressively presents a gender dimension of changes spanning more than 400 years of Song-Yuan history. Her work relies on an extensive collection of women-related texts throughout the empire. In contrast, this book focuses on merely one region in southeast China. The sources left by Song authors about women in this one region are too sparse to support an intensive study of change in their everyday lives. This is admittedly the limitation of a local case study. One small consolation is that what I cannot accomplish for women in life, I manage to trace for their afterlife. The excavations of modern archaeologists have provided me with concen-

trated data to explore the gradual changes in the construction and burial goods of Fujian women's tombs from the Northern to Southern Song.

Chinese society is believed to have experienced important transformations from the Song to the Yuan-Ming period. Historians studying late imperial China have been actively engaged in seeking change and continuity from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries to enrich the theory of the "Song-Yuan-Ming transition" in the past decade. A thorough study of Song women's life experience connects women to the broader context of the great political, economic, and social transition of the time and facilitates our examination of current historical theory from the perspective of gender studies. Moreover, to compensate for the deficiency of the discussion on changes in Fujian women's lives, this book sometimes compares women in the Song to those in late imperial China and explores change and continuity in an extended time frame.

In this *longue durée* framework, one striking finding of this book is the relative freedom that Song women from all classes enjoyed in comparison with those from the Ming and Qing periods. The state and elite in the Song normally adopted a noninterference strategy in handling women's affairs. The state never issued edicts to regulate women's everyday behaviors and left the administration of female populations to local officials. Local governors were allowed to execute administrative autonomy in discouraging or promoting women-related customs. They, for instance, dissuaded parents from infanticide, urged women not to participate in unisex monastic events, constructed hot spring bathhouses, and granted honorary gate titles to women. In addition, because of their varied views of women, they may have employed different methods while solving individual women-related problems, such as dealing with lawsuits concerning household property.

In contrast to their *laissez-faire* predecessors, the Ming and Qing states appeared more proactive in intervening in women's everyday lives. They sanctioned extraordinary cases of exemplary women and funded the construction of memorial arches for them at thoroughfares, disseminated decrees that prohibited women from visiting temples nationwide, made it law that a woman's dowry permanently stayed in her husband's family,¹ and so on. Local governments were supposed to—but in reality did not always—obey the court on such matters, which made the administration of women at the local level full of cooperation, contradiction, and tension between the local and central authorities.

The tremendous differences between the Song and Ming-Qing that I have discussed above do not suggest the decline of women's mobility

in late imperial China. Women's manipulation of domestic authority and expansion of living space outside the *jia* never stopped throughout Chinese imperial history. Although the Yuan-Ming-Qing states and officials played more active roles in inculcating women with Confucian norms, most elite men in these times admired the classical gender ideals that Song Confucian revivalists had commented on,² and at the same time, they continued the Song literati's realistic attitudes and flexibility in dealing with women's matters in everyday life. Ming-Qing gender scholars have revealed women's agency in "the inner quarters and beyond" in many respects. In comparison, their female ancestors in the Song can be said to have lived in a more woman-friendly society, if one takes into account the government's and scholars' more tolerant attitudes toward and favorable views of women. In the final analysis, the two attributes that have been conventionally attributed to Ming-Qing women, autonomy and mobility, undoubtedly can be traced back to the Song era.

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- Tomb 74. Zhang Jia 張家 and Xu Bing 徐冰. "Fujian Jian'ouxian shuinan Song Yuan muzang" 福建建甌縣水南宋元墓葬. *Kaogu* 2 (1995): 187–190.
- Tomb 75. Jian'oushi bowuguan 建甌市博物館. "Fujian Jian'oushi dikou Bei Song jinian mu" 福建建甌市迪口北宋紀年墓. *Kaogu* 4 (1997): 73–75.
- Tomb 76. Chong'anxian wenhuaguan 崇安縣文化館. "Chong'an chutu Song mu wenwu" 崇安出土宋墓文物. *Fujian wenbo* 1, 2 (1989): 11–13.
- Tomb 77. Chen Yinlong 陳寅龍. "Pucheng Wan'an Song mu" 浦城萬安宋墓. *Fujian wenbo* 1 (1988): 34–35.
- Tomb 78. Chen Yinlong 陳寅龍 and Sang Ziwen 桑子文. "Pucheng Song mu qingli jianbao" 浦城宋墓清理簡報. *Fujian wenbo* 2 (1990): 52–57.
- Tomb 79. Chen Yinlong 陳寅龍 and Sang Ziwen 桑子文. "Pucheng Song mu qingli jianbao" 浦城宋墓清理簡報. *Fujian wenbo* 2 (1990): 52–57.
- Tomb 80. Chen Yinlong 陳寅龍 and Sang Ziwen 桑子文. "Pucheng Song mu qingli jianbao" 浦城宋墓清理簡報. *Fujian wenbo* 2 (1990): 52–57.
- Tomb 81. Huang Bingyuan 黃炳元. "Nan'an xian shuitou xiang shanqian cun kuifeng shan Song mu" 南安縣水頭鄉山前村奎峰山宋墓. Fujiansheng bowuguan Archives. Unpublished manuscript, 1958.
- Tomb 82. Quanzhoushi bowuguan 泉州市博物館. "Jinjiang Tiezaoshan Songmu qingli jianbao" 晉江鐵灶山宋墓清理簡報. *Fujian wenbo* 3 (2007): 42–44.

Notes

Introduction

1. The local rulers of Fujian surrendered to and recognized the central authority of the Song state in 978, eighteen years after the latter's founding.

2. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 162.2210.

3. The coverage of Fujian Circuit in the Song dynasty roughly equals that of today's Fujian Province.

4. Jianning, where Emperor Xiaozong (r. 1162–1189) resided before he succeeded the throne, was elevated to be a *fu*-level prominent prefecture in 1162. Before then, it was identified as the Prefecture of Jianzhou 建州 on the administrative map of Northern Song. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 162.2208.

5. On the study of Jianyang as “one of the most important and long-lived printing centers of imperial China,” see Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit*.

6. Satake, “Tō Sō ki fukken no kazoku to shakai,” 423–31; and Clark, “Overseas Trade and Social Change,” 54–65.

7. Neo-Confucianism is a revival and recreation of ancient Confucianism. In the past decades, Sinologists have realized it is difficult to reach an agreement on the definition of neo-Confucianism in the study of the long late imperial Chinese history, due to their varied research perspectives. Recently most scholars have used this term to refer to *Daoxue* 道學 “the Way of Learning” in original Chinese texts. It was a synthetic philosophical school, which trumped moral cultivation over intellectual achievements and political sensitivity and constructed a Confucian lineage to support their moral authority and subsequent legitimacy in carrying over the “authentic” way of Confucius.

8. Liu Mianzhi 劉勉之 (1091–1149), one of Zhu Song's close friends and Zhu Xi's tutors, married his daughter to Zhu Xi not long after he moved to Chong'an.

9. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 9.

10. For an entire list of funerary accessories excavated from Huang Sheng's tomb, see Fujian sheng bowuguan, *Fuzhou Nan Song Huang Sheng mu*.

11. According to the epitaph of Huang Sheng, Zhao Yujun's father died in his early childhood, and his grandfather raised him instead. *Ibid.*, 81.

12. The phrase is a part of the title of Ko et al., *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*.

13. Mann and Cheng, *Under Confucian Eyes* is a collection of English translations of primary sources focusing on gender issues in medieval and late imperial China.

14. For instance, as Peter Bol states, the neo-Confucian theory of learning explains that "every human being possesses [an innate potential to be a moral actor] equally as one of the living things in the larger organism of the natural world." However, the realization of moral potential depended on "the practice of neo-Confucian teachings and the study of neo-Confucian texts," to which most women did not have access. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 4–5.

15. Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 627–50.

16. See Bol, "The 'Localist Turn' and 'Local Identity.'"

17. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 246.

18. For explanations of Song women's autonomy and rising dowries, see Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 582–94.

19. *Min* originally indicated a minority tribe in southeast China. The First Emperor (259–210 B.C.) established Minzhong Commandery 閩中郡 after he united China and founded the Qin empire. Since then, *min* became an administrative district. In the eighth century, *Fujian* was substituted for *min* on China's administrative map, while the region continued to be referred to as *min* in cultural discourse. For the evolvement of the concept of *min*, see He, *Min wenhua gailun*, 1–11.

20. For example, see Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks*; Clark, *Portrait of a Community*; and So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China*.

21. For example, see Chia, *Printing for Profit*; and Birge, *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction*.

22. Fong and Widmer, *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*, 10.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, 11.

Chapter 1

1. The interpretation of the *jia* depends on its context. The versatility of this word makes it difficult to look for a counterpart in English. Song historians normally translate it as "family." Patricia Ebrey understands *jia* as "the family

as a corporate unit” and annotates that “this family was not merely the collection of individuals then living together, but the family that persists through time: the ancestors and descendants, the house and property, the tradition and honor.” See Ebrey, “Women, Money, and Class,” 23. For Ebrey’s concentrated discussion of the concept of the *jia*, see Ebrey, “Conceptions of the Family in the Sung Dynasty,” 222–24. Peter Bol also adopts the “family” translation and elaborates on the meaning of the *jia* from the state’s and society’s perspective—“an economic and ritual corporation based on the idea of kinship.” See Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 236–37. In this book, I use the term *jia* to refer to the Chinese concept of 家, in order to preserve its multilayered connotations in Song textual discourses.

2. Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan*, 1.

3. Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 57.

4. *Ibid.*, 91.

5. Xie, *Gujin hebi shilei beiyao*, 15.378.

6. Liu, “Menhu yu Zhongguo gudai shehui,” 817.

7. The Tang government issued the strict Rules of Construction and Repair to regulate “architectural types, structural measurements, and architectural ornaments in association with the rank of officials.” See Feng, *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor*, 54–59. These Tang rules were inherited by the Song as official codes. The construction of gates was prescribed in accordance with the house owners’ social status. See Toghto et al., *Song Shi*, 154.3600. The gates of elite households were presumably more complicated and elaborate than those of lesser wealth. As Wang Qijun’s study of vernacular dwellings of the Song period shows, “outside the residences of aristocrats and officials, *wutou men* (black-head gates) or door house was constructed, and in the case of the latter, the ‘interrupted laying’ method was often employed in the middle bay to allow for the passing of carts and horses.” Wang, *Vernacular Dwellings: Ancient Chinese Architecture*, 120. The architectural details of a *wutou* gate are illustrated in an imperially commissioned Northern Song building manual. Li, *Yingzao fashi*, 32.62. See fig. 1.1.

8. The study of gates and their decorations is a popular project among those scholars studying Ming-Qing residences and furniture because a large number of material sources are well-preserved and available today. And their works show that many designs and patterns of the gates in the Ming-Qing period are related to gender issues. See, for example, Lou, *Zhongguo jianzhu de men wenhua*.

9. Liu Zenggui elaborates on how the system of honoring civilians through the grant of gate titles worked in the Han dynasty. See Liu, “Menhu yu Zhongguo gudai shehui,” 850–52.

10. The concept of filial piety “in its mature formulation,” in Alan Chan’s and Sor-hoon Tan’s words, “serves to define the ideal relationship between parent and child, which helps to secure the place of the family at the center of the Chinese ethical worldview.” Chan and Tan, *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*, 1.

11. Jin, *Guangze xianzhi* (Kangxi 22), 7.11a. In this *xiao gan* title, the word *gan* has the sense of “cosmic response.” Heaven, an all-powerful deity of the cosmos, responded to Shangguan Chao’s filial act, which changed a cosmological balance.

12. On Zhen Dexiu’s contribution to promoting Zhu Xi’s thoughts, see Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy*, 241–45. Zhu Xi was one of the most influential synthesizers, theorists, advocates, and practitioners of neo-Confucianism (*daoxue*) in the Southern Song period. His reinterpretations of early Confucian canons were established as the orthodox state ideology in late imperial China and deeply influenced Chinese society. Zhen Dexiu’s tenure in Quanzhou lasted from 1217–1219. See Li, *Song Fujianlu junshou nianbiao*, 110.

13. In both Shangguan Chao’s and Ms. Lü’s stories, the paragons cut their flesh to serve the parents as medication. Offering body parts as medication was a contradictory cultural phenomenon in the Tang-Song period and became a culturally established expression of filial piety in late imperial China. See Qiu, “Bu xiao zhi xiao”; Kobayashi, “Sōdai no warimata no fūshū to shidayū”; Yu, *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence*, 62–88.

14. For Zhen Dexiu’s political career, see Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy*, 241–42.

15. Zhen, *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong wenji*, 24.10b–11a.

16. Bossler, “Faithful Wives and Heroic Maidens,” 759.

17. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 265.

18. Zhen, *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong wenji*, 24.10b–11a.

19. *Jin teng* means a metal box and a ribbon, literally. Zhen Dexiu is alluding to a story recorded in the *Book of Documents* (*Shang shu* 尚書), a Confucian classic. In the Zhou dynasty, King Wu was sick, and Duke Zhou made a document pledging that he would like to substitute for King Wu to be sick. Duke Zhou wrapped this document with a ribbon and put it in a metal box.

20. For the study of the ancient style (*guwen* 古文) in writing in the Tang-Song period, see Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 52–56.

21. For the study of Liu Zongyuan, see Chen, *Liu Tsung-yüan and Intellectual Change in T’ang China*, 773–819.

22. Zhen, *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong wenji*, 24.10b–11a.

23. Zhen Dexiu addressed the importance of establishing moral examples for local administration in a few of his official announcements targeted at colleagues, local gentries, and average commoners. See Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 7162.18–20, 27–29.

24. Several texts record different versions of how this title was issued by the government. The first appears in Zhen Dexiu’s “Yi Xiao Fang” essay itself, in which the plaque is said to be *biao qi lü* 表其閭 “hung on their lane-gate.” The second appears in a Ming local gazetteer, *Bamin tongzhi*, and states that the county administrator, Zhen Dexiu, praised the behavior, and *biao qi ju* 表其居 “hung a placard at their residence” as *yi xiao*. See Huang et al., *Bamin*

tongzhi, 68.3761. The third is in a Qing local gazetteer, *Jinjiang xianzhi*, which records that the county administrator, Zhen Dexiu, wrote down this affair and *biao suo ju* 表所居 “hung a placard where they resided,” as *yi xiao*. See Fang et al., *Jinjiang xianzhi*, 14.1b. In these three editions, the common verb describing how government officials sent the plaque to the Lü family was *biao* 表, which had been fixedly applied in similar contexts in early Confucian classics. In the *Shi ji* 史記, Cui Hao 崔浩 said, “*biao* means hanging a horizontal inscribed board on the lane gate (*li men* 里門).” See Sima, *Shi ji*, 5.2041. In the *Han shu* 漢書, Yan Shigu 顏師古 pointed out that “the lane gate (*li men* 里門) is called *lü* 閭. *Biao* means making it apparent and distinct.” See Ban, *Han shu*, 40.2030. In Zhen Dexiu’s narrative, he stated that the *yi xiao* title was placed on *lü*, which must have been the gate of the lane where Ms. Lü lived. Therefore, this lane was called *yi xiao fang* because of this *yi xiao* title, and Zhen Dexiu accordingly entitled his essay “Record of Yi Xiao Fang” (*Yi Xiao Fang ji* 懿孝坊記). In the two later local gazetteers, the location of this *yi xiao* title is more ambiguous. The word *ju* in *qi ju* and *suo ju* could be understood as either the Lü family’s house in a narrow sense or the lane where the Lü family’s house was situated generally. Since Zhen Dexiu’s essay is the earliest source and is more comprehensive and reliable than later texts, the real location of this *yi xiao* title must have been the gate of the lane where Ms. Lü resided.

25. Urban residents lived in government-regulated wards in the Tang dynasty. This dominant *fang* system of Tang cities gradually collapsed during the Tang-Song transition and was replaced by the system of streets and alleys accompanying the distinct trend of commercialization and urbanization. The revolutionary transformation of cities from the Tang to Song period was initially proposed by Katō Shigeshi 加藤繁 in the 1930s and intensively discussed by Japanese scholars half a century ago. For example, Miyazaki, “Kandai no risei to Tōdai no jōsei”; Saeki, “Kinsei Chūgoku no toshi to noson”; Shiba, “10–13 seiki ni okeru Chūgoku toshi no tenkan”; and Umehara, “Sodai no chiho toshi.” For a comprehensive review of the Japanese scholarship on Song urban studies, see Hirata, “Bibliography of Song Studies,” 204–209. During this transition, “the physical entities of the old residential wards” in the Song “may still have been present” as Yinong Xu suggests, although “their *raison d’être* was not.” Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 133. In Song local gazetteers, the *fang* was still recorded as a basic residential unit in cities. See Zhonghua shuju, *Song Yuan fangzhi congkan*.

26. For the map, see So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China*, 176.

27. In Song cities, some of the lane gates existed as “remnants of the entrances of the residential wards in the early Tang,” as Yinong Xu argues. Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 132. Although no visual sources of lane gates in Song Fujian survive, some contemporary sources from other districts, such as the map of *Pingjiang fu* (modern Suzhou), exemplify “in some cities, *fangbiao* 坊

表 or portals with plaques announcing the name of the neighborhood straddled the streets.” Kiang, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats*, 156.

28. This can be seen at the historical site of “three lanes and seven avenues” (*sanfang qixiang* 三坊七巷) at downtown Fuzhou.

29. Attaching honorary titles to the lane gates seemed to be a nationwide practice in the Song dynasty. Yinong Xu also notices “the supersession of the gates of residential wards by honorific gateways” in his study of “the process of medieval urban transformation in Suzhou.” Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 283, n. 26.

30. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China*, 184.

31. In addition to *yi xiao fang*, Zhen Dexiu was said to award a few honorary lane titles to local paragons in Jinjiang, including *jing xiao fang* 旌孝坊, *yi shu fang* 義塾坊, etc. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 14.703–04, 706; Fang et al., *Jinjiang xianzhi* (Qianlong 30), 13.409.

32. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 13.680.

33. Fan, *Hou Han shu*, 28.3624.

34. For example, the forty-first volume of the *Song huiyao jigao* has a special chapter collecting considerable imperial edicts on *jingbiao* throughout the Song period. Xu, *Song huiyao jigao*, 41.1687–94. The transition from the Northern Song to Southern Song might have interrupted the normal function of this awarding mechanism for a while. In 1145, a subject sent Emperor Gaozong a memorial suggesting he emulate the Han and Northern Song tradition of awarding exemplary subjects by “*biao*”ing their house or lane gates (*men lü*). Xu, *Song huiyao jigao*, 41.1692.

35. There are many examples of Song chaste widows recorded in local gazetteers of Fujian, but the cult of chastity did not come into being at that time. For a long time, the spread of the chaste widow ideal was attributed to the development of neo-Confucianism in the Song period. Fangqin Du and Susan Mann question this assumption by investigating the rise of neo-Confucianism and how it affected women’s beliefs about chastity in late imperial China, and they point out the rapid growth of the cult of chastity after the Yuan dynasty along with the government’s recognition and promotion of neo-Confucianism as the orthodox state ideology. Du and Mann, “Competing Claims on Womanly Virtue in Late Imperial China,” 222–27. Bettine Birge’s investigation of changes in marriage and women’s property rights also shows the nomadic customs brought by the Yuan Mongol rulers ironically facilitated the institutionalization of patrilineality and promoted the cult of chastity, which was not prevalent in the Song period. Birge, “Women and Confucianism from Song to Ming,” 212–40. Bossler examines the Song elite men’s accounts of heroic women, and claims they, including a number of neo-Confucians, aimed moral lessons at men and had no intention to promote female fidelity exclusively. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 251–89.

36. Beverly Bossler has pointed out an increase of writings for chaste women during the Northern Song–Southern Song transition, which “was inspired in part by widespread social and political anxiety about male loyalty, occasioned by the fall of the Northern Song.” Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 251. And I am interested in knowing whether such anxiety inspired local officials to engage more in awarding women’s loyalty. Unfortunately, the sources of chaste widows in Song Fujian in local gazetteers are limited. Moreover, they are all undated. I am able to date a small number of these cases by seeking the information of the chaste widows’ male relatives or the local officials who granted them honors. Although it is clear that cases from the Northern Song and Southern Song are both available, it is impossible to conclude whether the Southern Song cases outnumbered the Northern Song ones.

37. Wang, *Xinghua fu Putian xianzhi*, 31.2b.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 2b–3a.

40. For the relationship between women and their natal families in the Song dynasty, see Beverly Bossler, “‘A Daughter Is a Daughter All Her Life.’”

41. For the study of female household heads, see Yanagida, “Sōdai no joko”; Yi, “Tang Song shiqi de nühu yu guojia.”

42. Besides filial piety and chastity, women were also awarded by the government for their contributions to local communities and the state in the Song dynasty. See Tie, *Songdai shiren jieceng nüxing yanjiu*, 113–19.

43. See Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 143; Elvin, “Female Virtue and the State,” 129–135.

44. For example, Beverly Bossler suggests an increasing trend of awarding filial sons and principled women in the second half of the Northern Song period, resulting from the severe factionalism related to the New Policies. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 142–50. I have concerns about her conclusion; see my book review in the *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* (2014). Mark Elvin presents the examples of several Qing emperors’ varied attitudes toward government awarding. See Elvin, “Female Virtue and the State,” 128–29, 133.

45. For example, only two Fujian awardees are found in Xu, *Song huiyao jigao*, 61.14723, 14790; and one is recorded in *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*, 149.2815.

46. In official histories, the verbs describing the activities of awarding are either *zhao* 詔 or *ci* 賜, both indicating imperial authority and extraordinary glory.

47. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 5459.113–14; 7162.18–20.

48. For instance, in 1165, Lin Guangchao 林光朝 (1114–1178) eulogized the filial piety of a Fujian local scholar, who was awarded by the court with the construction of a *chuoxie* gate. Lin Guangzhao articulated the architectural style of the gate and claimed it was an old tradition, which indicated the uncommonness of such a practice, at least in Putian County at his time. See Zeng

and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 210.84–85. Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269), a later Fujianese, composed a poem to acclaim this filial scholar on being awarded a *chuoxie* gate by the state. The story was even recorded in the official Song history by Yuan scholars. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 456.13412. In the official chronicle, the building style of the *chuoxie* gate was explained the way it was in Lin Guangchao's commemorative essay, evidencing its specialty in the Song-Yuan period.

49. Feng et al., *Jianyang xianzhi* (Jiajing 32), 14.2b.

50. Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 79.

51. See Wu, *Zhongguo de men wenhua*, 270–72.

52. Kun et al., *Da Qing huidian shili*, 404.36522.

53. Ibid.

54. Katherine Carlitz's study of shrines to Confucian-exemplary faithful widows gives us some hints to answer this question. According to her, "monuments to the heroines of fidelity were to be found in every county" from the sixteenth century on. Carlitz, "Shrines, Governing-Class Identity," 612. She explains it as the result of the growing cult of fidelity in this period and the Ming dynasty governing class's efforts to institutionalize it. I suspect there was a distinctive trend of the departure of monuments from the *jia*, applicable to the celebration of all traditional Confucian virtues rather than exclusively the cult of widow fidelity.

55. Entitling lane gates did not apply to Fujian cities in the Ming-Qing period, when the *fang* evolved to be large-scale administrative districts in the urban spatial layout. For example, according to the late fifteenth-century gazetteer *Bamin tongzhi*, the urban area of Minxian 閩縣, the capital county of Fuzhou Prefecture, was divided into four *fang* in total. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 15.747–48. The Ming-Qing local gazetteers of Fujian record some extant *fang* (memorial arches) whose history of titles was traced back to the Song-Yuan period. I suspect that on the one hand, a few lane gates may have had survived from the Song-Yuan era and had been renovated and transformed to *paifang* in the Ming-Qing period, although they no longer symbolized entrances to residential wards. And on the other hand, new *paifang* were constructed at the original sites of some Song-Yuan lane gates, presumably on traffic arteries, which linked the Ming-Qing memorial arches to earlier lane gates.

56. Fei, *Cong dianfan dao guifan*, 126.

57. See two edicts issued in 1748 and 1749. Kun et al., *Da Qing huidian shili*, 403.36493–94.

58. According to Guo Songyi's study, the average number of chaste widows awarded by the central government per year skyrocketed from fewer than 100 in the seventeenth century to more than 15,000 in the second half of the nineteenth century. The total number of chaste widow awardees in the Qing was about forty times that of the Ming. Guo, *Lunli yu shenghuo*, 400–405. The flourish of large-scale state awards in the Qing must have increasingly devalued local awards.

59. Zhen Dexiu invited a Quanzhou man to his office and sent him back with such props to praise his filial piety. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 7162.27.

60. John Hay argues that walls in China “as boundaries were in themselves sites for meaning, having no inherent meaning of their own beyond the bounding function.” Hay, *Boundaries in China*, 13. This understanding also applies to the boundary of the middle gate, which originally had no gender or ritual meanings beyond its mere physical space-dividing function.

61. For the importance of the middle gate in early and medieval China, see Du, “Neiwai yu bafang,” 232–33.

62. For examples of the Tang literature on the middle gate, see Wu, “Tingyuan shen shen,” 26–31.

63. For the study of Song elites’ discussions of family ethical order based on the *Yi jing*, see Deng, “Neiwai zhiji yu zhixu geju.”

64. For the study of the significance of ritual in the Song Confucian thinking, see Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*, 48–53.

65. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 23.

66. Ebrey, “Women, Money, and Class,” 12.

67. For the intensified commercialization of women in the Song dynasty, see the chapters on courtesanship and concubinage in Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*.

68. Ebrey, “Women, Money, and Class,” 14.

69. *Ibid.*, 22.

70. Kong, *Li ji zhengyi*, 27.234; T. R. Legge, *The Sacred Books of China*, Part III, 454–55.

71. Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 212–13. For intensive discussions of gender and the related inner/outer issue in ancient classics, see Raphals, *Sharing the Light*, 195–234; Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women*, 69–94.

72. Sima, *Sima shi shuyi*, 4.43. Translation partly based on Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 23–24.

73. Zito, “Ritualizing Li,” 332.

74. For the English translation of Zhu Xi’s borrowing of Sima Guang’s inner/outer segregation theory, see Ebrey, *Chu Hsi’s Family Rituals*, 29. The Chinese word 中門 *zhong men* is translated as “inner door” in her citation.

75. Yuan, *Yuanshi shifan*, 3.4b. For a complete translation of Yuan Cai’s reference to Sima Guang’s work, see Ebrey, *Family and Property in Sung China*, 286.

76. The procedures of wedding and funeral ceremonies were controversial topics in the Song neo-Confucian discourse. Scholars adopted different approaches in dealing with ritual details in the two ceremonies. Among these discussions, Sima Guang and Zhu Xi proposed the most comprehensive, systematic and practical versions of family rituals. See Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*, 68–101; de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 21–87.

77. Zhu, *Jia li*, 20b. Translation partly based upon Ebrey, *Chu Hsi’s Family Rituals*, 58.

78. Ibid. Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*, 59.

79. de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 85.

80. Zhu, *Jia li*, 27b. Translation partly based upon Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*, 86. Zhu Xi's text is mostly a copy of Sima Guang's prescription. See Sima, *Sima shi shu yi*, 6.6b.

81. Funerals in the Song usually served men and women without discrimination, especially when Buddhist/Daoist rituals were performed. For example, the families who conducted funerals in Hangzhou invited male and female relatives to participate in Buddhist funerals, in which monks performed acrobatics to entertain all the guests. Even attendants and nannies of women who were invited were eager to go for the sake of enjoying the show. Tao, *Shuo fu*, 47.2194.

82. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 98.

83. For a survey of ritual manuals composed in the Song dynasty, see Zhang, *Zhili yi jiao tianxia*, 429–49.

84. Ibid., 457, 460.

85. Lü, *Song wen jian*, 13.173.

86. Ibid.

87. For example, Han Wo 韓偓 (842–914?) depicts that a pretty girl plays in the courtyard and rushes inside the middle gate when seeing a guest come. Lu, *Quan Tang shi*, 683.7838. Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) writes that he cries and enters the middle gate, noticing his wife is no longer there, although the inner chamber structures look the same. Lu, *Quan Tang shi*, 436.4834.

88. Shao, *Shaoshi wenjian lu*, 9.94.

89. Ebrey, "Women, Money, and Class," 22.

90. Both Fu Bi and Sima Guang joined the Elderly Elites' Club (*qi ying hui* 耆英會), consisting of thirteen preeminent elder celebrities living in Luoyang. Fu Bi was the host, and *qi ying hui* members sometimes had gatherings at his place. Wang, *Mianshui yantan lu*, 4.49. Therefore, Sima Guang must have known Fu Bi's *jia*'s layout and structures well. For Sima Guang's participation in the club, see Ji, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*, 161. For the cult of the old men in the formation of clubs of elders in Luoyang, see Yang, *Metamorphosis of the Private Sphere*, 211–12.

91. According to Fu Bi's wife's epitaph, she was a devoted lay Buddhist who conducted fasting and chanting practices at home. Shi, "Fu Bi jiazou mudi fajue jianbao," 6. I suspect Fu Bi locked himself outside the middle gate at night out of his respect for her ascetic life style.

92. The full text of her funerary inscription is recorded in Shi, "Fu Bi jiazou mudi fajue jianbao," 5–6.

93. Zhang, *Yanxing guijian*, 4.8a.

94. Sima, *Sima shi shuyi*, 4.43.

95. Guo, *Kuiche zhi*, 3.28.

96. In this case, the kitchen was on the outside. I assume at least in the Song, the kitchen was not necessarily located in the rear courtyard of a house as Francesca Bray's research shows. Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 110.

97. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, zhiyi 5.830–31.

98. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 208–49.

99. Huang, *Yanshan ji*, 34.15a.

100. Lü, "Women's Ascetic Practices," 89. The shifting epitaph rhetoric in medieval and late imperial China has been generally discussed by gender historians. See Bossler, *Powerful Relations*, 9–24; Mann, *Precious Records*, 1–3.

101. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 25.

102. Ko, "Pursuing Talent and Virtue," 14.

103. Du and Mann, "Competing Claims on Womanly Virtue in Late Imperial China," 220. In addition to didactic texts, visual representations of Confucian moral conduct, including filial behaviors in the forms of painting and illustration, were also prevalent in the Song period. See Barnhart, *Li Kung-lin's Classic of Filial Piety*, 73–155; and Murray, *Mirror of Morality*, 60–73.

104. Murray, *Mirror of Morality*, 243, n. 4.

105. This is Confucius's saying, recorded in the *Book of Filial Piety*. Cited from Barnhart, *Li Kung-lin's Classic of Filial Piety*, 118. The eleventh-century figure painter Li Gonglin illustrated the idea of children entertaining parents in a scene "characterized by a wonderful warmth and intimacy," suggesting the pleasure deriving from filial piety in Song society.

106. Xu, *Fuzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 19), 18.442.

107. Zheng, *Yanping fuzhi* (Jiajing 4), 4.525.

108. Huang et al., *Quanzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 28), 12.10a.

109. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 73.4043.

110. Yu, *Beitang shuchao*, 129.503.

111. For example, Zhu Xi entitled his bedroom *weizhai* 韋齋 after his father's courtesy name. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 78.3889.

112. It has been intensively addressed by scholars who study women's history in late imperial China. See, for example, Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 12–14; Mann, *Precious Records*, 15; and Fong and Widmer, *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*.

Chapter 2

1. Nuns were religious practitioners who left their own *jia* and did not end up in another *jia*. This is not really a form of travel that I investigate in this chapter, and thus it is not dealt with here.

2. As Mark Halperin has pointed out, pious women on pilgrimage "were stock characters in Chinese society." Although historical records of Song female pilgrims are "fewer, less detailed, and more fragmented" than the Ming-Qing

sources, “nothing so far known about late Ming and Ch’ing China suggests that sixteenth- or seventeenth-century women enjoyed greater freedom to pursue their religious interests than did their predecessors of the twelfth century.” Halperin, “Domesticity and the Dharma,” 52–53.

3. There are a number of Chinese scholars studying Song women’s career and their economic activities outside the *jia*. For example, Quan, “Songdai nūzi zhiye yu shengji”; Wu, “Qiantan Songdai funü de jiuye”; You, “Songdai funü de zhiye leibie suo fanying de funü shehui diwei”; Zhang, “Songdai nūxing jingshang tanxi”; Zhan, “Songdai funü jingji huodong tanxi.” As Deng Xiaonan has pointed out, “generally speaking, women belonging to the lower social strata had more opportunities to act outside their households than did those of the ruling group. It was not really a question of wish, but of economic necessity.” See Deng, “Women in Turfan During the Sixth to Eighth Centuries,” 101.

4. Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 12.

5. Li, *Zhuxi yulei*, 127.3058.

6. Liu, “Polo and Cutlural Change,” 218.

7. Shao, *Shaoshi wenjian lu*, 11.115; Cheng, *Er Cheng quanshu*, waishu, 10.3a.

8. Wing-tsit Chan investigates Zhu Xi’s travel records and reveals that Zhu Xi, like the earlier models he admired, often rode a horse and sometimes merely walked and took a carriage. Chan, *Zhuxi xin tansuo*, 151–157.

9. In Zhu Xi’s conversations with his disciples, he unintentionally talked about his contemporaries’ use of sedan chairs here and there. See Wu, “Mingdai shidafu yu jiaozi wenhua,” 6, n. 15.

10. Li, *Zhuxi yulei*, 127.3058.

11. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 150.3510.

12. According to Wang Dechen’s 王得臣 (1036–1116) *Zhu shi*, in his period, only the prime ministers, Sima Guang and Wen Yanbo, were permitted to take sedan chairs to go to court. Their experiences were called “special grace (*yi en* 異恩).” See Wang, *Zhu shi*, 1.6.

13. Even Li Gang 李綱 (1083–1140), a prime minister, wrote a document requesting the empress to allow him to take a sedan chair to go to his office. See Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 50.576.

14. In 1032, Emperor Renzong banned officials in Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang from using sedan chairs, except when the mountains were too dangerous to cross or when the officials were too sick to ride horses. Xu, *Song huiyao jigao*, 7.6504. The four places that Emperor Renzong pointed out were all mountainous districts in South China. In comparison to people who lived in the North China plain, people from the south may have found taking sedan chairs more necessary because of the unfavorable geographical conditions. Being far away from the political center, local officials were nevertheless strictly regulated in using sedan chairs as their colleagues serving in the capital were. However, it seems reasonable to assume local officials enjoyed more freedom in

using sedan chairs than the court officials in reality, considering the difficulties of enforcing such an edict at a local level. Actually, in 1108, Emperor Huizong issued an edict banning county magistrates' use of sedan chairs, which suggests the use of sedan chairs among local officials was not uncommon in the late Northern Song period. Anonymous, *Airizhai congchao*, 1.34.

15. The fact that Emperor Gaozong sanctioned officials to take sedan chairs was recorded in a few Song sources in similar ways. See Zhang, *Transformative Journeys*, 241, n. 82.

16. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 150.3510. Shao Xiaofeng suggests the prevalent employment of chairs and the elevation of Song people's sitting positions resulted in the vertical stretch of the sedan chairs, making them look different from the Tang predecessors. This improvement in technology and design of sedan chairs in the Song was inherited by the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties with minor modifications in size, material, and decoration. Shao, *Zhongguo Songdai jiaju*, 111.

17. This general introduction of the appearance of sedan chairs in the *Song shi* does not address the technical advances of sedan chairs in the Song dynasty. Wu Renshu suggests a sedan chair in the early Northern Song period was simply a chair with two poles attached for porters, without the box-like outer structure. Wu, "Mingdai shidafu yu jiaozi wenhua," 6. Sources in the second half of the eleventh century have evidenced the existence of sedan chairs with windows and screens, which conform to the description of sedan chairs in the official history.

18. Kong, *Qingjiang san Kong ji*, 7.4b. Other than this poem, Kong Wuzhong composed a few more to record his leisure time of enjoying sightseeing and reading in the sedan chair on the road.

19. Ibid.; Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 153.3577.

20. James Liu notices in the twelfth century, the lifestyle of the ruling class changed "from active involvement in physical exercise while riding to a sedentary life of being carried about in sedan-chairs." He suggests a connection between the widespread use of "this form of self-indulgent transportation" and the introduction of the custom of footbinding among upper-class women at the same time. Liu, "Polo and Cultural Change," 219–20. However, there is no evidence indicating the custom of footbinding resulted in women's seclusion and use of sedan chairs in the Northern Song–Southern Song transition. "Modern analyses of material cultures and gender perceptions do suggest that footbinding as social practice was likely to have begun in the tenth century." Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 261, n. 3. The Song scholars "associated footbinding with male power and excess, the femme fatale, and the ephemeral sensuality of harem dancers" rather than "female morality or chastity." Ibid., 115.

21. See Meng, *Dongjing menghua lu*, 7.151.

22. The painting of *Qingming shanghe tu* has been one of the most used visual sources for scholars to study the Northern Song capital, Kaifeng. Song

historians have different opinions on whether it is a realist representation of Kaifeng. For example, Valerie Hansen suggests the painter created an ideal and generic city in this Qingming scroll after Kaifeng was lost to the Jurchens in 1127. See Hansen, "The Mystery of the Qingming Scroll and Its Subject." Tsao Hsingyuan does not agree with her assumption and argues the painting "depicts the bustling traffic along the Bian River on the first day of the Qingming term, and the resultant prosperity river commerce brought to the capital." Tsao, "Unraveling the Mystery of the Handscroll 'Qingming shanghe tu,'" 157–58. The number of female figures in the Qingming scroll is considerably low, which has been explained by scholars in varied ways. Patricia Ebrey uses the rarity of women in the painting to evidence the physical separation of the sexes in Song society. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 21–23. Robert Hymes questions her use of the Qingming scroll and points out "the difficulty for the historian is to know which aspects of a painting are 'indications' of how the world really looks," and "which are proclamations of how it should." Hymes, "Review of *The Inner Quarters*," 235. Valerie Hansen finds about twenty women out of the some 500 people shown in the scroll, and she argues the scroll depicts a utopia "barely disturbed by women." Hansen, "The Mystery of the Qingming Scroll and Its Subject," 199. Yasuhiro Satake sides with Ebrey in accepting the painting as a realistic representation of the urban life in the Song capital and uses the development of lineage to explain the limitations on women. See Satake, "Qingming shanghe tu weihe qiannan yinü," 785–826. As Hansen has pointed out, "social historians do not know with any certainty the extent to which women were secluded in the twelfth century." Considering the controversies in the study of the Qingming scroll, I do not treat it as a faithful representation of women's everyday life in the capital. However, its depictions of women's use of sedan chairs are in conformity with written sources recording such behaviors in the Northern Song capital, which visualizes our knowledge of women's out-of-jia activities conventionally based on texts. There are seven sedan chairs in the painting. Some of these users can be identified as females because they are either accompanied by maidservants or followed by male escorts on horseback.

23. In the *Qingming shanghe tu*, all men except for monks have their hair knotted on the top of the head, and some wear dark-colored cloth caps. This woman in the sedan chair wears an ornamental headgear, which together with the delicate facial outline reveals her female identity.

24. In the most famous Song collection of occult anecdotes, the *Record of the Listener* (*Yi jian zhi* 夷堅志), a story describes how people were assigned to different vehicles according to their physical condition and (in one case) class. During Emperor Huizong's reign, Zhao Banzhi 趙頒之 was traveling to his new post in Fengxiang 鳳翔 together with his relatives. "All male family members rode horses. All female ones took carriages. Only one woman was pregnant, and was placed in a sedan chair carried by four soldiers . . . and one nanny rode

a donkey behind the sedan chair." In contrast to other female members who shared common space with each other in the carriages, the pregnant lady was assigned to a separate and enclosed space of her own. The soon-to-be mother was allotted a sedan chair on account of her special physical condition. Compared with sedan chairs relying on human labor, carriages, which were powered by animals, were much faster, more efficient and spacious, and could accommodate more riders, but they were less comfortable. The disparity in speed is evident later in the story when an accident occurred because the sedan chair lagged far behind the other vehicles. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, 21.1748.

25. Ihara, *Sōdai Chūgoku o tabisuru*, 146.

26. The fact that the same ban was issued four times indicates the efficacy was not as desired. It was a common problem for the Northern Song court in its application of sumptuary laws. Christian de Pee, in his study of commercial culture in the Northern Song capital, has discovered many examples of "the reiteration of sumptuary prohibitions and the occasional relinquishment of prohibited goods to the sphere of commodities." de Pee, "Purchase on Power," 174.

27. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 153.3573–77.

28. Ibid., 153.3577. Although Emperor Huizong promulgated the imperial decree allowing officeholders to take sedan chairs, he still treated officials' use of sedan chairs as an imperial courtesy. In the winter of 1113, officials had difficulties with riding horses to imperial audiences because of the unusually cold weather and slippery roads. Emperor Huizong sent out a decree allowing them to enter the palace in sedan chairs. Ibid., 62.1342.

29. Ibid., 153.3576.

30. Zhang et al., *Ming shi*, 65.1611.

31. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 150.3510.

32. A story in the *Yi jian zhi* suggests how sedan chairs had become a popular and necessary mode of transportation for Southern Song women, including prostitutes. A prostitute, Li Rou 李柔, died in her twenties. Her old neighbor, a soldier, Wang Xian 王先, did not know about her death and encountered her ghost on the street one day. "[Wang], surprised that she was walking on the street alone, asked her, 'Where are you going?' She answered, 'I am going to Lin'an 臨安 to watch the imperial sacrifice to Heaven and Earth.' Then [Wang] said, 'Why don't you take a maidservant with you? Why don't you take a sedan chair? How could a single woman feel comfortable taking a long trip alone?' Li Rou smiled, but did not answer his question." Wang Xian, still unaware he had met a ghost, felt uneasy to see Li Rou walking on the street alone, even though she was not a typical woman assumed to be hidden behind the middle gate in a regular *jia*. The anecdote author describes Wang Xian as a low-class commoner. In his mind, it is reasonable for a commoner to assume an average woman in his time should be seated in a sedan chair and accompanied by maidservants while on a journey for the sake of comfort. A ghost story intends to impress its audience with its abnormality. The image of the female ghost Li

Rou, a prostitute who walked alone on a long journey, was unusual, dangerous, but at the same attractive and stirring. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, jiazhi 4.741.

33. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 204.

34. *Ibid.*, 167–80.

35. Fujian Sheng Bowuguan, “Fujian Jiangle Yuandai bihuamu.”

36. Zhuang, *Jilei bian*, 2.53.

37. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 41–42.

38. For the research on Zhuang Chuo’s life experience, see Xiao Luyang, “Zhuang Chuo shengping ziliao kaobian,” in Zhuang, *Jilei bian*, 135–57.

39. Li, *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji*, jiaji 1.58.

40. According to an official memorial in 1131, the numbers of imperial sons, imperial daughters, imperial wives, and imperial concubine-mothers were respectively 122, 126, 78, and 13 in Quanzhou and 95, 49, 30, and 2 in Fuzhou. Xu, *Song huiyao jigao*, 16666.2839.

41. Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*, 42–44. I am grateful to Chaffee for bringing to my attention the possible influence that imperial refugees had on Fuzhou and Quanzhou.

42. *Ibid.*, 19.

43. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 150.3510.

44. He, *Min shu*, 38.941.

45. Meng, *Dongjing menghua lu*, 3.67–68.

46. On Song men’s use of carriages, see Zhang, *Transformative Journeys*, 94.

47. Lu, *Laoxuean biji*, 1.3.

48. Bossler, *Courtesans, Concubines*, 183.

49. I include a number of sources recording women’s use of transportation vehicles in the Northern Song capital in this chapter by considering two facts. First, vehicles in Kaifeng served as intra- and interregional transportation and were very likely available in many districts throughout the Song empire. Second, many of these female users ended up in Fujian during the Northern-Southern Song transition, and their transportation experience in Kaifeng may have had an impact on local custom, as the sedan chairs used by women in Fuzhou and Quanzhou seem to have suggested.

50. Ding, *Songren yishi huibian*, 7.310–11.

51. The *Song shi* records several imperial edicts regulating the decoration of carriages. In 1034, “the carriages taken by grand families were prohibited from being decorated with red as well as five-color lacquer. Black as well as five-color paint were allowed.” Three decades later, in 1076, another decree promulgated that “commoners are allowed to have cattle-drawn carriages decorated with black and five-color paint. Preceding honor guards and accessories are prohibited.” In Emperor Renzong’s reign 仁宗 (1022–1063), the former edict forbade “grand families”—presumably meaning high officeholders or imperial affines—to appropriate red as well as five-color lacquer initially monopolized by the imperial family. Grand families were permitted to use black and five-

color paint to claim their high social status. But by the succeeding reign of Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1067–1085), this privilege of grand families had been appropriated by commoners. The imperial court then issued the latter statute to make a compromise in order to solve the problem. Commoners were permitted to decorate their carriages with black as well as five-color paint just as the grand families could, but they were prohibited from imitating grand families in equipping their vehicles with honor guards. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 153.3576. The imperial decrees suggest that the paints embellishing carriages, along with attendants and processional accessories, were viewed as symbols indicating the passengers' social status. The appropriation of these accoutrements revealed certain people's attempt to challenge class limitations and perhaps to move into a higher social group.

52. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 150.3510.

53. Of course as a common transportation mode, carriages were not just used in Song capitals. The official documents from the *Song shi* indicated that a carriage's appearance was supposed to present the passenger's official status without gender distinction in the metropolis. In addition, this phenomenon also existed in other localities. For example, according to Lu You's narrative, "women of Chengdu's 成都 celebrated families all took carriages drawn by cattle for transportation. The carriages of the Guo family in the city's northern zone were the most vibrant and gorgeous. They were viewed as the best in the city, and called 'Guo Family Carriages' (*guo jia che zi* 郭家車子). In the west chamber of Jiangdu Temple 江瀆廟, there was a mural painting of cattle-drawn carriages. The supervisor in the temple told me [Lu You] that these were the carriages of the Guo family." Lu, *Laoxuean biji*, 2.24. No matter who decided on the formal design of these carriages, they were finally transformed into symbolic objects showing the passengers' glorious family background. Lu You's record tells us that carriages belonging to different families were differently decorated. The design of these carriages clearly did not follow any guidelines issued by the central government. Furthermore, it was manipulated to assert a family's high status and even incorporated into a temple mural. For the female passengers, these carriages represented their upper-class status and even revealed the owners' family identity by way of distinctive decoration.

54. On Song men riding horses and donkeys, see Zhang, *Transformative Journeys*, 91–97.

55. Gao, *Shiwu jiyuan*, 3.139.

56. Zhou, *Qingbo zazhi*, 2.53.

57. For the evolution of hanging veils used by women in the Tang, see Qi, "Nongzhuang danmo zong xiangyi," 311–12; Rong, "Nü ban nan zhuang," 724–27.

58. In the Southern Tang Painting Academy student Zhao Gan's (10th century) "Along the River at First Snow," two women wearing caps with hanging veils ride donkeys along the river. For the study of this painting, see Hay,

“‘Along the River During Winter’s First Snow’”; Sturman, “The Donkey Rider as Icon,” 55–57. I am grateful to Ankeney Weitz for bringing this painting to my attention.

59. In the *Yi jian zhi*, one story is told about a woman being forced to wear a veil while riding a horse. The daughter of Li Bangzhi 李邦直 fainted during an excursion and stayed in bed for one day. When she woke up, she told her relatives she was selected as the bride of a deity. An old lady accompanied her out of her house and rode a horse following her. She took a black veil and covered the girl’s face, saying, “You are about to be a bride. How could you let others see you?” Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, bu15.1689. Some of the records in the *Yi jian zhi* look superstitious from modern scholars’ perspective. Although there have been some concerns about the reliability and factuality of this book, Alister Inglis’s research shows “for the most part, Hong was a reasonably reliable recorder of events, and his attempts to verify what he intimated to be the factuality of his accounts certainly went beyond previous authors of *zhiguai* or unofficial history.” Inglis, *Hong Mai’s Record of the Listener*, 151. Although from our point of view the daughter’s vision could well be her imagination, the story still suggests that an unmarried girl was supposed to cover her face with a veil when she rode a horse on the street. In fact, there are actual stories supporting this observation. The local administrator of Ruzhou 汝州 sent his daughter to the capital to marry Han Yi 韓億 (1017–1098). She “rode a horse, wore a cape and a cap with a hanging veil,” and was accompanied by “a splendid dowry and well-dressed attendants.” Ding, *Songren yishi huibian*, 7.296. In this record, Han Yi’s bride also wore a veil as the daughter of Li Bangzhi did in her dream.

60. Shao, *Shaoshi wenjian lu houlu*, 30.235. A village lady wearing a veil presented a petition to Wang Anshi while he rode a donkey and passed through the village.

61. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, jia 15.127. A legal administrator’s wife wearing a veil entered a doctor’s house to ask for treatment.

62. Ibid., ding 9.611. At the gate of an obstetrician’s house, there was a woman’s wooden statue, the face of which was covered by a veil.

63. Ibid., zhijing 8.945. One evening, an officer stopped at a hostel and asked for hot tea. A concubine brought him a cup of tea. Her face was covered with purple veil. The officer said, “You women are inside the chamber; it is unnecessary to [wear the veil].”

64. Chen, *Chongzhuan Fujian tongzhi* (Daoguang 9), 56.2b; Zhou, *Xiamen zhi* (Daoguang 12), 15.9.

65. For example, in the Northern Song capital, after celebrating a lantern festival, three students of the National Academy followed a “gorgeous woman” who wore a veil and rode a horse to a wine shop. They flirted with her and identified her as a prostitute. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, yi 15.313.

66. In the painting, the woman is looking at a vendor who is trying to sell her something on the street.

67. In a number of anecdotes, male protagonists were shocked by the fact that the supposedly beautiful women were ghosts who concealed their horrifying faces behind the veils. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, jia 15.127; yi 15.313.

68. Song women did not have the same independent economic identities as their male contemporaries did. However, elite women's dowries, and the legal power of independent dowry ownership that Song law provided them, gave them independent economic identities most definitely, to the distress of neo-Confucian commentators, among others. Bettine Birge's *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China* is good on this; see also Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 582–94.

69. On Song men's domination in the outer sphere, see my discussion of the ideal and practice of men/outer versus women/inner in chapter 3.

70. Ya-ting Wu summarizes Song travelers' lodging places under five categories: commercial inns, temples, governmental lodging stations, boats, and normal residences. Wu, "Buan de xiehou," 150–62.

71. For a comparison of the themes of inn-wall writings left by Song men and women, see Zhang, "Communication, Collaboration, and Community," 22.

72. According to Qin et al., *Chongxiu Shaowu xianzhi* (Minguo 26), the woman's name was Han Yunu 韓玉奴, while in Zheng, *Quanmin shihua*, her name was recorded as Han Yufu 韓玉父.

73. Xu Jiang was a river located in the Prefecture of Western Jiangnan (modern Jiangxi).

74. Qiu Hu 秋胡 was a scholar in the Spring and Autumn Period who abandoned his newly married wife for five years and pursued his official career away from his hometown. Qiu Hu's wife's story was recorded in Former Han historian Liu Xiang's 劉向 *Lie nü zhuan* 列女傳 "Biographies of Various Women," which became an elementary textbook for women's education in the later dynasties.

75. On the specific genre of abandonment complaints, see Wixted, "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao," 166–67.

76. Zheng, *Quanmin shihua*, 10.12a–b. Spotting the locations that Han Yunu mentioned on a modern map suggests she had taken a roughly 700-mile circuitous trip when she arrived at the Mokou post house.

77. Susan Mann studies the travel record of a Qing woman, Zhang Wanying. Like Han Yunu, Zhang Wanying mapped her route accurately. "The terse map," according to Mann's interpretation, "gives Wanying's travel narrative its ultimate power to display her virtue." Mann, "The Virtue of Travel for Women in the Late Empire," 68–69.

78. Wu, "Buan de xiehou," 168.

79. Scholars have been questioning the female authorship of many Song poems. For example, Wilt Idema has shown even the famous so-called Song woman poet Zhu Shuzhen, who was said to leave a large number of writings

compiled by her contemporaries, was a hoax created by men. See Idema, "Male Fantasies and Female Realities," 19–25.

80. Samei, *Gendered Persona and Poetic Voice*, 1.

81. *Ibid.*, 27–28.

82. Li, "Heroic Transformations," 423.

83. Li Qingzhao (1081–ca. 1151) was the most famous Song female lyric poem writer in Chinese literary history. For the biographies of Li Qingzhao and translations of her works, see Hu, *Li Ch'ing-chao*; Rexroth and Chung, *Li Ch'ing-chao*, *Complete Poems*; and Egan, *The Burden of Female Talent*.

84. Wixted, "The Poetry of Li Ch'ing-chao," 157.

85. Female writers in the Ming-Qing period frequently addressed their inner chambers in poems when their inner world collapsed during the social turmoil. As Xiaorong Li argues, their writings demonstrate a "strong identification with the normative location of women." "Even when war had led to the destruction of their homes, the boudoir could function as a spiritual site from which they drew both comfort and strength to empower themselves in adversity." Li, *Women's Poetry of Late Imperial China*, 120, 122. I suspect such a strong identification with the *jia* existed among Song elite women as well. However, the very limited number of poems reportedly composed and inscribed outside the *jia* do not convey such a deep emotion, which might partly result from the real authorship of men, who lacked such a *jia*-oriented consciousness or sensitivity that was more likely attributed to women.

86. Zhang, "Communication, Collaboration, and Community," 22.

87. Susan Mann points out "the power of the female writing voice in late imperial times contrasts sharply with its weakness during the Song era." "The absence of prominent women writers in the gentry families of the Song era" suggests "sharp cultural breaks that separate the late Ming and Qing periods from the Song." Mann, *Precious Records*, 22–23. Ronald Egan's search for women as writers in the Song dynasty also shows "in no way was women's participation in literary culture, as writers and readers, as widespread or common as it became in later imperial times." Egan, *The Burden of Female Talent*, 9. In the Song time, women's writings had not developed into a substantial part of women's culture as they did in the Ming-Qing period. And authors as well as assumed readers were predominantly elite men.

88. Some inn-wall poems in female voice describe the hardships that contemporary men also experienced on the road during a chaotic period. See, for example, Zhou, *Haoranzhai yatan*, 2.44.

89. Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses," 91.

90. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, *jia* 8.68.

91. Laing, "Women Painters in Traditional China," 81–101. Actually in the Song, some court ladies imitated the emperors' calligraphies, which were assumed to be the most "masculine" handwritings, and served as their ghostwriters without being discovered. Lee, *Empresses, Art, and Agency in Song Dynasty China*, 80–94. Deng, "Yanying zhi jian," 32–35.

92. On Song women of letters, see Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 120–24; and Bossler, “Women’s Literacy in Song Dynasty China.”

93. The relationship between women’s talent and virtue was a controversial subject in the male discourse in imperial Chinese history. Although “virtue was always prized over talent,” talent, “when graced with modesty, was always an admirable trait, especially when serving a proper end.” Hui-shu Lee uses visual sources to “demonstrate the degree to which Song society approved of the cultural talents as contributing to the formation of a woman’s virtue,” and argues “achievements of the letters and arts was a widespread goal among women of the Song.” Lee, *Empresses, Art, and Agency in Song Dynasty China*, 76–80, 106–109. It partly explains Song elite men’s positive attitude toward women’s education. However, although they generally appreciated the basic reading and writing skills of elite women, they did not perceive women’s literary capability in a similar confirmative way. As Ronald Egan suggests, “there were deep ambivalences in Song society about educating women, allowing women to write, and, even if they did write, preserving or circulating what they produced.” Egan, *The Burden of Female Talent*, 12.

94. Egan, *The Burden of Female Talent*, 24.

95. Robert Harrist points out inscriptions were written by Song elite in unprecedented large numbers at scenic or historic sites, which can be added to “the list of characteristic embodiments of literati culture.” See Harrist, *The Landscape of Words*, 273–77.

96. For Song inscriptions on Mount Gu, see Harrist, *The Landscape of Words*, 275.

97. Huang, *Gushan zhi*, 6.8a.

98. Huang, *Fuzhou moya shike*, 228.

99. Mann, “The Virtue of Travel for Women in the Late Empire,” 55.

100. Huang, *Fuzhou shiyi moya shike*, 84. For the study of Fujian elite women’s traveling in the Qing dynasty, see Li, “Imaging History and the State: Fujian Guixiu (Genteel Ladies) at Home and on the Road.”

101. On women’s domestic communities, see Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 179–218.

102. In the study of late imperial history, abundant Ming-Qing women’s writings are understood as a major part of women’s culture, whose exclusiveness, in Dorothy Ko’s words, “was built on a shared interest in literature as writers, editors, and readers.” Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 14. However, very few women’s writings have been transmitted from the Song dynasty or earlier. Whether this results from conditions of history (women rarely wrote) or of historiography (women wrote, but their writings were not preserved and transmitted), it does not imply an absence of women’s culture in the earlier period. The root of women’s culture—their self-perceptions and self-expectations, as well as the intimacy they developed with other women and men, both inside and outside their families—persisted throughout Chinese history, although it was demonstrated in various ways depending on different historical contexts.

103. Yao, *Xuepo sheren ji*, 50.525.
104. Ibid.
105. Harrist, *The Landscape of Words*, 276.
106. Fong, "Engendering the Lyric," 119.
107. Yao, *Xuepo sheren ji*, 50.525.
108. Ibid.
109. Harrist, *The Landscape of Words*, 276.
110. Zou Miao Zhuang married Yao Mian in 1256 and died one year later. Ever since the 1220s, Emperor Lizong had officially recognized and promoted the legitimacy and authority of Zhu Xi and his *dao xue* movement.
111. Yao, *Xuepo sheren ji*, 50.525.
112. In the epitaph, Yao Mian recorded his wife's passion for tourism. "She [Zou Miao Zhuang] favored landscape sightseeing. On the boat to the west, she said to me, 'Although you abandoned your official assignment, you should not abandon landscape.'" Yao, *Xuepo sheren ji*, 50.525.

Chapter 3

1. The concept of "local society" (基層社會 in Chinese and 地域社会 in Japanese) in the study of Chinese imperial history was first raised by Japanese scholars in the 1970s and has been intensively discussed ever since. For the reviews of Japanese scholarship on the study of local society in the Song period, see Mori, "Chūgoku zenkindai," 201–11; Sōdaishi, *Sōdai nin no ninshiki*, 1–26; Endo, "Sōdai no chiikishakai to shūzoku," 1–5; Oka, *Sōdai enkai chūki shakaishi kenkyū*, 5–27. The study of local society in China has been productive since the 1980s. For the review of Chinese scholarship, see Wu, "Huigu yijiubaling nian yilai Songdai."

2. "The local exists on many levels." Despite going beyond the geographic boundaries authorized by the state, it never existed independently of administrative regions. According to Peter Bol, "generally speaking, at least for the purpose of public investment in ventures which define and name a locale, the county and its administrative superior . . . remain the most significant units." Bol, "Local History and Family in Past and Present," 307.

3. Gerritsen, *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming China*, 13.

4. See, for example, Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750–1550"; Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*; Bossler, *Powerful Relations*; Bol, "The Rise of Local History"; Bol, "The 'Localist Turn'"; Bol, "Neo-Confucianism and Local Society."

5. Local historians have been focusing on a number of districts in the south of the Song empire, such as Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Fujian. For a summary of the differences between their studies, see Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 627–50.

6. For the study of economic and cultural diversity in Song Fujian, see Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks*; So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China*; Lin, *Wenhua de dili guocheng fenxi*, 65–84.

7. Kong, *Li ji zhengyi*, 27.234.

8. Sima, *Sima shi shuyi*, 4.43.

9. Liu Jingzhen examines the use of the phrase that “women have no outer affairs” in Song women’s funerary inscriptions and reveals the dilemma that male authors encountered in writing women’s epitaphs. See Liu, “Nü wu waishi?”

10. Zeng, *Yuanfeng leigao*, 4.15b–16a.

11. On women’s roles as inner helpers in the Song, see Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 114–30.

12. For the citation of these epitaphs, see my article “Naiji to Kaiji.” Many of these examples are not from Fujian, but they contribute to our understanding of elite men’s discussion of “women have no outer affairs” in general.

13. Fan, *Taishi Fangong wenji*, 50.2b; Chen, *Jianghu zhangweng ji*, 35.8b; Sun, *Zhuhu ji*, 12.15a.

14. Lü, *Donglai ji*, 13.17a; Zhou, *Duzhai qiandao bian*, 28.5a; Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 34.9a.

15. Su, *Su weigong ji*, 62.8b; Chao, *Jilei ji*, 65.3a; Ouyang, *Wenzhong ji*, 76.11b.

16. Wang, *Wending ji*, 16.15b; Zhang, *Yuhu ji*, 15.9b.

17. Zheng, *Beishan ji*, 31.14a; Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 34.17a.

18. Hymes and Schirokauer, *Ordering the World*, 54.

19. See Huang, “Keju, jingji yu jiazhu xingshuai,” 127–46.

20. McDermott, “Family Financial Plans of the Southern Sung,” 51.

21. Bossler, *Powerful Relations*, 20.

22. Liu Jingzhen, Beverly Bossler, and Bettine Birge have done surveys of Song funerary inscriptions for women. They “find scattered references to this theme of women taking over the financial affairs of a household to release husbands and sons for outside pursuits in inscriptions of the Northern Song, but the theme becomes far more common in the Southern Song.” Birge, *Women, Property and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China*, 174.

23. Han, *Nanjian jiayi gao*, 22.34b.

24. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 139.5563.

25. Men’s visualizations of and attitudes toward women’s misfortune changed over time in writing. Although miserable images like Liu’s cousin were rarely seen in Song women’s epitaphs, by the Ming they had been widely adopted by male writers as tropes for women’s virtue.

26. Liang et al., *Chunxi Sanshan zhi* 39.8241.

27. Li Bozhong studies the gender division of labor in the Jiangnan region in the Ming-Qing period. He points out the “men till/women weave” pattern did not become the dominant economic mode until the mid-Qing era. Before

then, men and women usually collaborated in farming and weaving although the division of labor varied in different places. Li, “Cong ‘fufu bingzuo’ dao ‘nangeng nüzhi’”; and Li, “‘Nangeng nüzhi’ yu ‘funü banbiantian’ jue se de xingcheng.” Although the situation in the Song remains unclear in general, the pattern of “men till/women weave” was by no means taken for granted, at least in Fujian.

28. He, *Min shu*, 38.941.

29. *Ibid.*, 38.942.

30. Yuan, *Dongtang ji*, 20.24b.

31. Lin, *Zhuxi yuzhai shiyigao xuji*, 22.15b.

32. Huang, *Siru ji*, 4.38a.

33. In the 1270s, the Song court traveled along the eastern coast of Fujian to flee the Mongol force, and major cities in Fujian were conquered by the Mongols one after another. But in the epitaphs that Huang Zhongyuan composed for Ms. Lin and Guo Tang, there is no hint suggesting the influence that dynastic transition had on their family.

34. Zhang, *Luchuan guilai ji*, 10.9b.

35. Ebrey, “Women, Money, and Class.”

36. *Ibid.*, 22.

37. He, *Min shu*, 142.4206.

38. Such female figures included daughters as well as wives. Unmarried daughters sometimes assisted parents in managing households, and they sometimes were designated by fathers to be in charge of household matters when mothers were absent. The experience in natal families prepared them well for taking up household management responsibilities in their husbands’ *jia* after they married. Chen, *Fuzhai xiansheng longtu Chengong wenji*, 10.34a; Chen et al., *Shaowu fuzhi* (Jiajing 22) 13.36b; Chen, *Minzhong jinshi lue*, 10.21a–b.

39. Ebrey, *Family and Property in Sung China*, 49–51.

40. Bettine Birge makes a similar argument by highlighting the influence of Zhu Xi and his followers on popularizing this mode of division of family responsibilities. Birge, *Women, Property and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China*, 174–85.

41. *Ibid.*, 170–71.

42. Joseph McDermott examines two influential instructions on family finances written by mid-Southern Song neo-Confucian scholars, and notices that both of them “ascribe all household financial management work to males.” McDermott, “Family Financial Plans of the Southern Sung,” 52. However, failing to address women’s agency in household management in prescriptive literature by no means suggest that neo-Confucians disregarded women’s engagement in family finances in real life. Although there exist no extant women’s epitaphs composed by the two family instruction authors, I doubt they would oppose women’s management of family business considering the widely available positive comments on women’s such activities in epitaphs left by Song neo-Confucians.

43. Yang, *Yang Guishan ji*, 35.4b.
44. Ebrey, *Family and Property in Sung China*, 50.
45. Yuan, *Yuanshi shifan*, 1.19a–b. Translation based upon Ebrey, *Family and Property in Sung China*, 220.
46. Han, *Nanjian jiayi gao*, 22.25b.
47. Some Song women's success in household management was even praised by their descendants in later periods. For example, Zhao Xiuan 趙秀安 was from a Song royal family. After her husband died, she took charge of the household property. She bought a graveyard and purchased sacrifice lands. In the local gazetteer of the Qing dynasty it is recorded that "the family fortune continued generation after generation till now. It was entirely the princess's contribution." Rao, *Fuqing xianzhi* (Qianlong 12), 18.676.
48. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 38.5b.
49. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 149.5901.
50. See Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 582.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 115.
54. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 237.
55. For the study of the Fan charitable estate, see Twitchett, "The Fan Clan Charitable Estate, 1050–1760."
56. For the study of Zhu Xi's discussions of descent groups, see Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Ritual in Imperial China*, 158–65. For the influence of these ideas on local practices in Fujian in the Song and Yuan periods, see Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship*, 93–96.
57. On the ways Song elite males contributed to the development of their lineages in local society, see Huang, *Songdai de jiazu yu shehui*, 251–70.
58. Ouyang, *Ouyang Wenzhonggong wenji*, 36.11a.
59. Takatoshi Endo suggests Song elite men communicated with and exerted influences on their lineages after they relocated to places other than their hometowns. I suspect his discovery is also applicable to women who lived away from their kin, like Ms. Lu, although the primary sources do not provide such details. See Endo, "Kitasō shitaifu no yorii to sōzoku."
60. Wang, *Yongtai xianzhi* (Minguo 11), 11.261.
61. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 37.29b.
62. Huang, *Zhijiaoweng ji*, xia.60b.
63. In comparison to the Tang, women in the Song received more dowry from their natal families. There are plentiful records of Song women's control and use of dowry. As Robert Hymes has claimed, "In principle not only the dowry but any property acquired by using it was the woman's own, and legal decisions that allotted property based on whether it was bought with dowry funds or the husband's family's funds show that the principle often held in practice." See Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 585.

64. Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*, 155.

65. *Ibid.*, 160.

66. Chen, *Fuzhai xiansheng longtu Chengong wenji*, 10.34a–b.

67. The examples I have examined are all about imperial daughters-in-law.

In addition, there survive a number of epitaphs of imperial daughters who married into elite families in Fujian. The writers praised them for faithfully taking on the roles of wife, mother, and daughter-in-law in spite of noble background. See, for example, Chen, *Fuzhai xiansheng longtu Chengong wenji*, 45b–47b; Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 150.5933–34, 158.6194–96, 6200–202.

68. He, *Min shu*, 140.4286.

69. For the development of charitable schools in the Song, see Wang, *Songdai zongzu he zongzu zhidu yanjiu*, 106–22.

70. Walton, “Charitable Estates as an Aspect of Statecraft in Southern Sung China,” 270–76.

71. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuzi wenji*, 93.4532.

72. *Ibid.*

73. von Glahn, “Community and Welfare,” 234.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuzi wenji*, 91.4430.

76. Chen, *Beixi daquan ji*, 50.6b.

77. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 149.5879.

78. As Richard von Glahn’s study of the Yangzi delta shows, “in contrast to the North China Plain, with its compact, relatively large villages, a highly dispersed pattern of settlement prevailed in the delta. ‘Villages’ often consisted of a number of small hamlets; although in close proximity to each other the hamlets remained distinct settlements.” This generalization of settlement patterns also applies to villages in Song Fujian. von Glahn, “Towns and Temples,” 190.

79. Whether *xiang* functioned as one level of administrative unit in the Song local society has been a controversial topic among Song social historians. For example, Wang Di views it as a virtual financial district. Xia Weizhong objects his opinion by claiming it is a local administrative unit. Wang, “Songdai xiangli liangji zhidu zhiyi”; Xia, “Songdai xiangcun jiceng zuzhi yanbian de jiben qushi.” Considering the unofficial identities of the *xiang* and *li* leaders, I agree with Huang Kuanzhong in treating them as virtual administrative organizations. Huang, “Cong zhongyang yu defang guanxi hudong kan Songdai jiceng shehui de yanbian,” 317.

80. On Zhu Xi’s definition of *xiang* as a level of society and a sphere for social action, see Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*, 134.

81. Chen, *Motang ji*, 10.2a.

82. Liao, *Gaofeng wenji*, 12.20b.

83. Lin, *Wangshan ji*, 2.9b.

84. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*, 135.

85. Ibid.

86. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*, 167. Hymes investigates various narratives related to the famine relief in Fuzhou 撫州, reveals the local officials' difficulties with the Fuzhou elite, and concludes that it "may reflect not only the limits of a local official's power, but fundamental disagreement as to what should be done." See Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*, 157–67.

87. Zheng, *Xitang ji*, 4.17b.

88. Wei, *Houle ji*, 17.25a.

89. For the study of Wang Anshi's New Policies, see Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 530–42.

90. Liu et al., *Nan'an xianzhi* (Kangxi 11), 16.871.

91. Huang et al., *Quanzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 28), 66.2b.

92. Min, *Jiajing Ningde xianzhi* 4.22b.

93. The Song laws demanded food should be provided regularly in Song jails. However, according to Brian McKnight's research, prisoners suffered from a lack of food here and there, which I assume also happened to those prisoners who received food donation from Ms. Qiu. McKnight, *Law and Order in Sung China*, 361–63.

94. For further discussions on the interaction between women and local government, see chapter 4.

95. In this case, *zhai* means government forts in the countryside with troops stationed inside.

96. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 460.13486.

97. For the function of local military forces in Fujian in regional chaos and their relationship with the Southern Song government, see Huang, *Nan Song difang wuli*, 51–107.

98. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 460.13486.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid., 460.13487.

101. Chen, *Beixi daquan ji*, 50.6b.

102. Huang, *Zhijiaweng ji*, xia.60b.

103. Many women in Song Fujian were generous donors to temples and shrines. However, since they expected rewards from the supernatural on such occasions and their money merely flew to religious institutions, their behaviors did not fit in the category of *ren* in the eyes of male elite narrators. But laywomen who spent money on local welfare might be called *ren* even if religious motives were involved.

104. Wei, *Houle ji*, 17.25a.

105. For the maps and geographic details of the Mulan weir, see Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks*, 149–51.

106. Chen, *Putian shuili zhi*, 2.2a.

107. Ibid., 7.1b.

108. For the thirteen stone inscriptions, see Dean and Zheng, *Fujian zongjiao beiming huibian: Xinghuafu fence*, 18–19, 32–33, 52–55, 65–66, 88–90, 118–20, 178–79, 208–09, 213–214, 217–19, 224–25, 268–69.

109. Hugh Clark suggests “very likely she had married into a Putian family and invested her own resources for the good of her affines.” Clark, *Portrait of a Community*, 76. However, the primary sources show Qian Siniang was an unmarried woman when she died.

110. Chen, *Putian shuli zhi*, 7.1a–b.

111. When Li Hong’s project was completed in 1082, Fang Tianruo 方天若 composed an essay to celebrate the success. According to Fang, Cai Jing and Cai Bian 蔡卞 (1048–1117), the powerful ministers whose hometown was Xianyou County of Xinghua Command, cared about the irrigation problem in Putian, and requested the emperor to issue an edict to recruit weir builders. Cai Jing knew Li Hong’s reputation of wealth and generosity, and wrote him a letter to invite him to build the *Mulan Pi*. Fang’s essay is collected in *Mulan Pi zhiji* 木蘭陂志集, which has only one copy in the library of Putian City, and seems unknown to English scholarship. Zheng Qiujian 鄭秋鑒, a local scholar in Putian, has confirmed that Fang’s record is trustworthy by comparing it with other related Song sources. Fang Tianruo’s text provides by far the most comprehensive information about different roles that the central government, local officials, local powerful families, sponsors from other districts, and water work specialists played in the construction of the *Mulan Pi* during Emperor Shenzong’s reign. However, many details in the essay, especially the Cai brothers’ participation, are not available in four Southern Song stone inscriptions on the *Mulan Pi*, very likely due to the notorious reputation of the Cai brothers and Fang in factional conflicts.

112. Clark, *Portrait of a Community*, 75.

113. The law on irrigation was one of Wang Anshi’s New Policies during the Xining Reign (1068–1077) of Emperor Shenzong. The state encouraged people to participate in the construction of local irrigation networks and rewarded those who made prominent contributions. See Ono, *Sōdai no suiri seisaku to chiiki shakai*, 45–49.

114. Zheng, *Jiaji yigao*, 2.1a.

115. The study of daughters’ property rights in the Song dynasty has been a productive and controversial field in Chinese, Japanese, and English scholarship. In spite of diversified interpretations of Song property laws, scholars all agree that an unmarried daughter’s inheritance rights, in some cases even equal division of the father’s property with her brothers, were protected by the Song government, which offered them more financial autonomy than the later Ming–Qing women. See, for example, Birge, “Women and Confucianism from Song to Ming,” 213–21; Liu, “Nan Song zaishinü fenchanchuan tanyi,” 445–504.

116. Xie et al., *Fujian tongzhi* (Qianlong 2), 54.2b.

117. On the worship of Qian Siniang as a local deity of Fujian in the Song-Yuan-Ming-Qing period, see Kojima, “Seishi to inshi,” 147–52.

118. Lin, *Mulan pi shuili zhi*, 157–58.

119. *Ibid.*, 158.

120. Chen, *Putian shuili zhi*, 8.29b–30a.

121. Lin, *Mulan pi shuili zhi*, 159.

122. Chen, *Putian shuili zhi*, 8.29a–b.

123. At the end of the Chunyou 淳祐 reign (1241–1252), the state offered the title of “supportiveness and correspondence” (*xieying* 協應) to the shared temple of Qian Siniang and Li Hong. Chen, *Putian shuili zhi*, 8.28b. During the Jiading 嘉定 period (1260–1264), Qian Siniang was bestowed an independent official title—“A mistress of kindness, martyrdom, supportiveness, and compliance” (*hui lie xie shun furen* 惠烈協順夫人)—by the state. Chen, *Putian shuili zhi*, 5.18b.

124. Chen, *Putian shuili zhi*, 7.3a–b.

125. Qian Siniang was not unique in the study of Song women’s personal participation in irrigation projects. For example, Ms. Wu, a Jiangxi widow and a contemporary of Qian Siniang, contributed to the construction of a local weir in response to the government’s call. A comprehensive description of her deep involvement is preserved in Wang, *Guangling ji*, fol.22b–23b.

126. Chen Hongjin (914–985) was the last warlord of Fujian during the Five Dynasties period. He surrendered Quanzhou and Zhangzhou to Emperor Taizong 太宗 in 978 and admitted the Song state’s control over Fujian.

127. Lin, *Xianyou xianzhi* (Qianlong 36), 43.1b.

128. Cai, *Lizhi pu*, 1.9a.

129. *Ibid.*

130. Wang et al., *Changtai xianzhi* (Kangxi 26), 10.18a.

131. Kieschick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 214.

132. *Ibid.*, 203.

133. Some of the records of the construction of bridges and roads in Song Fujian reveal female donors’ lay identities. For example, in Luoyuan 羅源 county of Fuzhou, there is a Song inscription of road construction, in which some donors are identified as laywomen (*nü dixi* 女弟子). Huang, *Fuzhou shiyi moya shike*, 226.

134. Wang, *Xinghuafu Putian xianzhi* (Qianlong 23), 4.10b.

135. Qiu, *Lianjiang xianzhi* (Minguo 27), 7.6b.

136. Li et al., *Funing fuzhi* (Qianlong 27), 9.9a.

137. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 149.

138. *Ibid.*

139. Chen, *Zhizhai xiansheng wenji*, 47.9a.

140. For example, Xue Cheng’s 薛成 mother in Jintan 金壇 County (today’s Jiangsu Province) was committed to weaving all her life. She was wor-

ried about the absence of a well in southeast Jintan. When she was sick to the point of death, she said to her son, “Since the time when your father was still alive, I wove to make you clothes for cold and hot days, and used the surplus to cover the cost of our food. After you grew up and established your career, I did not give up weaving. There has been no need to spend my weaving incomes, and I have accumulated a certain amount of money. I want to [use my money to] construct a well, but my illness deteriorated.” Realizing her poor health condition, she asked her son to carry out her wish. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 20.31b. Like the women in the Fujian example, this woman donated what she earned through weaving to the construction of a local public project.

141. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 149.

142. Lu Huayu collects and analyzes many Tang poems of weaving women, in which women are unexceptionally depicted as skillful but reluctant and miserable workers. See Lu, *Quan Tang shi*, 154–62. Robert Hymes reads women weavers at home in poems as “a trope of women’s sadness for many centuries in China, though in earlier periods associated with love, not taxes.” Hymes, “Song Society and Social Change,” 579.

143. Wang, *Xinghuafu Putian xianzhi* (Qianlong 23), 4.10a.

144. Women who contributed to the construction of local projects were identified with either surnames or full names.

145. Bao Jialin and Lü Huitzu discover that some Song women successfully exhorted people in their own communities to sponsor the repair of local monasteries. Bao and Lü, “Furen zhi ren yu waishi,” 268. I assume some women also played the role of fundraisers in the construction of nonreligious public projects. Although I haven’t found such records in Song Fujian, one extant inscription from the Yuan dynasty shows in Minhou county of Fuzhou, a certain Ms. Chen solicited funds to reconstruct the Yongtong Weir in 1349. Huang, *Fuzhou shiyi moya shike*, 197.

146. Huang et al., *Quanzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 28), 10.26b.

147. Ibid., 9.29a.

148. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 19.967.

149. Xie et al., *Fujian tongzhi* (Qianlong 2), 8.54a.

150. Peter Bol uses the concept of “literati voluntarism” to characterize Song neo-Confucians’ construction of local literati communities. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 246–53. Although women occupied no legitimate positions in the blueprint of such male-dominant communities, male literati’s promotion and practice of local voluntarism very likely influenced women living in the same districts, especially those in elite families.

Chapter 4

1. According to Robert Hymes, the Song elite extended well beyond those households that held office at any given moment to include the entire

shidafu 士大夫 stratum, which was identified not by officeholding but by its style of life (especially including education) and to a secondary degree by its participation (not success) in the civil service exams. See Hymes, “Sung Society and Social Change,” 621–22. Women in elite families who did not happen to be holding office at the moment, probably had many opportunities to influence official life too—a different range of opportunities perhaps than women whose immediate male kin were holding office at that moment, but still real opportunities.

2. Lin, *Zhuxi yanzhai shiyi gao xuji*, 21.8a.

3. Zhen, *Xishan xiansheng Zhen Wenzhong gong wenji*, 45.19b.

4. The fundamental Confucian principle of filiality ensured a mother more domestic authority than a wife in the *jia*. Their influences on a man (son/husband) and his attitudes toward them are thus varied. For more discussions, see chapter 5 on women and religion.

5. Fang, *Tie'an ji*, 34.4b.

6. *Ibid.*

7. As Oka Motoshi's study shows, Song elite men used the term *friend* (you 友) and presented the appreciation of friendship in their writings much more frequently than their Tang predecessors, which partly resulted from their participation in civil service examination-related activities. See Oka, “Naisō ki no chiikishakai ni okeru tomo.”

8. Chen, *Chongzhuan Fujian tongzhi* (Daoguang 9), 256.11b.

9. Lin, *Jiajing Xiaoshan xianzhi*, 2.55; Xu, *Heng tang ji*, 19.13a.

10. Although Ms. Yu's epitaph is not available, the posthumous biography that Yang Shi composed for her father shows she was from a local family without official background. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 2701.125. Her ancestors were wealthy local landlords. Her father was the first one who studied Confucianism and passed the civil service examination at the county level. Ms. Yu was his only child, who was presumably trained to help the parents manage their considerable household property and deal with various land-related affairs before she married out.

11. Chen, *Chongzhuan Fujian tongzhi* (Daoguang 9), 256.11b.

12. Lin, *Jiajing Xiaoshan xianzhi*, 2.55.

13. On Qian Siniang's participation in local public project, see chapter 3.

14. Bossler, “Women's Literacy in Song Dynasty China,” 330.

15. For instance, a Fujian scholar-official, Chen Xiang 陳襄, composed an epitaph for a certain Ms. Fu, who came from a prestigious official family in the eleventh century. Ms. Fu accompanied her father in reading the histories of Han and Tang. Noticing her great interest, her father sighed, “This girl likes affairs. . . . One day I should marry her to a scholar to bring glory to our lineage.” Chen, *Guling ji*, 20.17a–b. In this case, the father deliberately transmitted knowledge of “outer affairs” to the daughter. He enjoyed reading out histories to the daughter and very likely communicated with her about her thoughts. Her

enthusiasm for state and public affairs recorded in the history books assured her father that she was a good match for a scholar-official. In the father's eyes, an elite girl should learn about elite men's conventional affairs in order to understand and support her future husband.

16. A more general motive for educating women in public matters, or at least not preventing them from learning about them, would have been the ideal of "companionate marriage" that Ebrey shows was already important (though not universal, of course) in the Song. People might assume that an elite man would want a wife who was generally able to talk with him about any matter he might be interested in. See Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 158–60.

17. Ibid.

18. Such records are not limited to Fujian but widely available across the Song empire. For instance, Deng Xiaonan presents many examples similar to the Fujian ones in her study of elite women in Suzhou. Deng, "Songdai Suzhou shiren jiazu zhong de funü."

19. *Ganguan* was a subofficial functionary who served as a kind of chief clerk in many agencies in the Song. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 276.

20. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuzi wenji*, 37.1484–85.

21. The details of Liu Ping's official career are recorded in his epitaph, written by Zhu Xi. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuzi wenji*, 92.4489. Although Liu Ping got the *ganguan* assignments, he did not end up taking these positions because of the problem of attrition in the government.

22. Anonymous, *Minggong shupan qingmingji*, 12.471.

23. The *Minggong shupan qingmingji* is one of the most frequently used books in the study of Song legal history. See Birge, *Women, Property and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China*, 67–76; Takahashi, *Sōdai Chūgoku no hōsei to shakai*, 223–48.

24. Anonymous, *Minggong shupan qingmingji*, 12.471.

25. Liang, "Haoheng yu zhangzhe," 45–93.

26. Clark, *Portrait of a Community*, 79.

27. As I have discussed in chapter 3, many elite men attributed the rise of the *jia* to women who were in charge of everyday operation of family affairs.

28. On the interaction between Song local government and elite in general, see Huang, "Songdai jiceng shehui de quanli jiegou yu yunzuo," 278–82.

29. Anonymous, *Minggong shupan qingmingji*, 12.471.

30. The replacement of local government was not viewed essentially deteriorating. Satake Yasuhiro points out some prestigious Fujian families temporarily functioned as local rulers through controlling local public administration. They returned local power to and were thus awarded by the state in the early Song period. This contrasted with Ms. Guan's notorious efforts of privatizing political power. Satake, "Songdai jianzhou diyu de tuhao he difang xingzheng," 225–26.

31. Chen, *Zhangpu xianzhi* (Kangxi 39), 16.1205.

32. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuzi wenji*, 98.4782. On the filial miracles that bring on auspicious portents, see Knapp, *Selfless Offspring*, 99–104.

33. Feng Kang (744–809) was a high-minded official in the Tang dynasty. See Ouyang and Song, *Xin Tang shu*, 161.4986.

34. Xu, *Fuzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 19), 19.453.

35. Satake Yasuhiro reconstructs a Song county hall (*xianya* 縣衙), which resembled the imperial palace in layout in spite of their tremendous difference in scale. The residential zone of a county magistrate and his relatives was located in the innermost part of the county hall. Satake, “Saku mura ji shin no kenkyū sono kisoteki saikousei,” 244–45.

36. See Umehara, *Sōdai shihō seido kenkyū*, 169–84.

37. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 162.2210; Chen, *Houshan tancong*, 5.70. In the Ming-Qing local gazetteers, the popular custom of Fujian is still to be litigious. “The high litigation backlogs,” according to Melissa Macauley’s research, was attributed “both to artful litigation mastery and to the fluid, ever-negotiable popular notions of property in the region that developed after the fifteenth century.” Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*, 229.

38. The study of the prevalence of litigation in the Song is popular among Chinese and Japanese scholars. For the review of the scholarship, see Liu, “Nan Song yusong panjue wenshu zhong de jiansong zhi tu,” 167–68; Ogawa, *Dentō Chūgoku no hō to chitsujo*, 15–18.

39. Women and law in the Song is a big topic, among which the study of women’s property rights has been the most controversial as well as productive field that attracts scholars’ attention worldwide. For the most updated review and bibliography of recent scholarship, see Liu, “Nansong zaishinū fenchanguan tanyi.”

40. Birge, *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China*, 24.

41. In the six extant official admonitions attributed to Song authors, four were composed and published during the Song period, among which the three books of the *Zhouxian tigang*, *Zuoyi zizhen*, and *Zhoulian xulun* not only propose basic principles for officials, but also address details of local administration and community. See Liang, “Cong Songdai de guanzhenshu kan Minggong shupan qingmingji de xingzhi,” 164–65; Liu, *Mingjing gaoxuan*, 330.

42. The authorship of *Zhouxian tigang* has been a controversial subject in Chinese scholarship. Some scholars attribute it to Chen Xiang, while some argue the author is not identifiable.

43. Chen, *Zhouxian tigang*, 2.11.

44. There are similarities between the *Zhouxian tigang*, *Zuoyi zizhen*, and *Zhoulian xulun* in terms of content and argument, which indicates the importance of some issues in the eyes of local officials in general. Liang Gengyao explains the similarity by suggesting that there were a number of official admonitions circulated at the Song time, and the authors from later periods consulted and

borrowed ideas from earlier manuals. See Liang, "Cong Songdai de guanzhenshu kan Minggong shupan qingmingji de xingzhi," 170.

45. Li, *Zuoyi zizhen*, 3.13a.

46. Hu, *Zhoulian xulun*, 6.8.

47. See Chen, *Zhouxian tigang*, 2.11; and Hu, *Zhoulian xulun*, 6.8.

48. Xin, *Gutian xianzhi* (Qianlong 16), 7.184.

49. Yang, *Quanzhou fuzhi* (Wanli 40), 10.825.

50. On the study of cut-off households in the Song dynasty, see Birge, *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yüan China*, 97–104.

51. Weng, *Xuxiu Pucheng xianzhi* (Guangxu 26), 22.7a.

52. Birge, *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yüan China*, 105.

53. Wang Pingyu's study of the cases related to maidservants in the *Qingming ji* shows local judges did not discriminate against maids because of their subordinate identities, and maids sometimes were actively involved in lawsuits for their own interests. Wang, "Minggong shupan qingming ji zhong suojian de nüshi susong," 213–36.

54. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 250–60.

55. *Ibid.*, 258.

56. Chen et al., *Shaowu fuzhi* (Jiajing 22) 12.3b–4a.

57. Many Song local officials required that petitions should fit in certain templates, which suggests female plaintiffs must have gotten help from legal experts to file complaints. During the Song period, legal experts were active in local society, with or without formal employment. They were neither officials nor clerks, but commoners in terms of social identity. See Guo, *Songdai falü yu shehui*, 145–49; Guo et al., *Songdai minjian falü shenghuo yanjiu*, 196–200. Although it is not clear where and how Song women sought professional support, they might have the right connections and channels to access it as another form of technical knowledge.

58. She must have expected to receive some formal document from the local officials to prove their support of her pursuit of remarriage. But the lack of related sources prevents us from knowing whether there existed a formulaic remarriage certificate.

59. Chen, *Zhouxian tigang*, 2.19.

60. Some Song admonition manuals for officials articulate the distinctive requirements for women's formal petition letters. For example, see Li, *Zuoyi zizhen*, 6.34a.

61. The primary sources about abduction either mention male and female victims at the same time or address women's misfortune specifically.

62. Dou, *Song xingtong*, 20.356–62.

63. For example, see Shi, "Songdai yanjin guaimai renkou," 33; Yu, "Songdai maimai funü xianxiang chutan," 102.

64. Liang, *Chunxi Sanshan zhi*, 39.6b.

65. Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140–1196) was once the governor of Fujian. In a memorial, he informed Emperor Xiaozong (r. 1162–1189) that the abduction of women happened in both Fuzhou and Quanzhou. Yang, *Lidai mingchen zouyi*, 117.1545.

66. Shi, *Maofeng zhenyin manlu*, 8.6a. For the phenomenon of infanticide, see my discussion below.

67. Liang, *Chunxi Sanshan zhi*, 39.6b.

68. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 192.4767.

69. Shi, *Maofeng zhenyin manlu*, 8.6a.

70. Infanticide during the Song period has been a topic attracting many social historians' attention in Chinese scholarship. It became a popular practice in multiple districts and was even described as a local custom of Fujian in Song texts. But the degree of infanticide seems to have varied in accordance with the location, which I will discuss soon.

71. Fu, *Yanping fuzhi* (Qianlong 30), 46.6b–7a. Liu Jingzhen creates a table listing all the regions where infanticide was said to be popular in the Northern Song and Southern Song respectively. Liu, *Bu ju zi*, 95–96. This general survey of nationwide cases shows infanticide very likely happened in economically underdeveloped districts. Inland areas including Jianzhou, Nanjianzhou, Tingzhou and Shaowu command were consistently notorious places of infanticide throughout the Song period. In contrast, coastal regions like Zhangzhou, Quanzhou, Xinghua command, although referred to in the Northern Song sources (the first half of the eleventh century), leave us no records about infanticide at all in the Southern Song, presumably due to their unprecedented growth of economy from the eleventh century on.

72. Liu Jingzhen summarizes the economic reasons that caused infanticide in three categories on the basis of her comprehensive exploration of infanticide in the Song sources. First, the shortage of fundamental life resources; second, overburden of taxation; third, the consideration of future division of household property. Liu, *Bu ju zi*, 84. All these reasons are mentioned in the local sources of Fujian.

73. Michelle King argues “an infant’s sex seems to have become the definitive motive for infanticide in China only by the late imperial period.” King, *Between Birth and Death: Female Infanticide in Nineteenth-Century China*, 5.

74. Ouyang, *Ouyang Wenzhonggong wenji*, 30.6a.

75. Yang, *Lidai mingchen zouyi*, 108.1447.

76. Issuing and posting admonishing texts was a popular strategy adopted by Song local officials to improve local customs. See Gao, “Songdai zhouxian guanfu de bangyu.”

77. Zhu, *Weizhai ji*, 10.10a.

78. Although no primary sources inform us of the feelings of female infanticide practitioners, it seems reasonable to suspect they struggled with the guilt of performing a criminal act (killing a child) as well as grief (losing a child).

79. In his essay on infanticide, Zhu Song sighed that “people surely can not be overcome by the law.” But he believed officials could bring them to reason. Zhu, *Weizhai ji*, 10.11a.

80. Xu, *Song huiyao jigao*, 150.5861.

81. Bi, *Xu zizhi tongjian*, 154.4135.

82. In his memorial to Emperor Xiaozong, Zhao Ruyu points out three disadvantages that infanticide brought to Fujian. First, it violated human ethics, imperiled the humanness of the court, and ruined cosmological harmony. Second, it caused serious imbalance of sex ratio, which resulted in a great number of crimes. Third, it led to abduction of human labor. Yang, *Lidai mingchen zouyi*, 117.1545.

83. Liu Jingzhen suggests that in comparison to Northern Song officials who emphasized the importance of laws and moral persuasion in solving the problem of infanticide, those in Southern Song relied more on economic aid although these strategies all existed in both the Northern Song and Southern Song period. Liu, *Bu ju zi*, 106–22.

84. Wang, *Zhu shi*, 1.14.

85. Yang, *Yang Guishan ji*, 3.49–50.

86. Xu, *Fuzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 19), 49.992.

87. Liu Jingzhen collects the data of the years when children-raising granaries were established in a number of districts in south China, among which Fujian was the initiator who started the project in 1178. Liu, *Bu ju zi*, 101–103. It seems a few Fujianese or people who held office in Fujian spread the strategy to other regions where they were assigned to be administrators. Before Lin Guanyi practiced it in the Western Prefecture of Jiangnan, children-raising granaries were only available in Fujian, the Eastern Prefecture of Jiangnan 江南東路 and the Southern Prefecture of Jinghu 荊湖南路. In the Eastern Prefecture of Jiangnan, the supervising official was Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235), a Fujian native. While in the Southern Prefecture of Jinghu, the responsible official was Zhen Dexiu's close friend Zhao Chongdu 趙崇度 (1175–1230), whose father Zhao Ruyu was the major advocate of the children-raising granary project in Fujian.

88. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 5.261.

89. Ibid., 5.284. Wang, *Min du ji*, 28.6b–7a.

90. Shao, *Tingzhou fuzhi* (Jiajing 6), 2.7a; Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 9.437–38.

91. Local sources show elite men in Song Fujian enjoyed and sometimes promoted hot spring bathing. A few of them even left poems eulogizing the unusual comfort that “natural bathing (*ziran tang* 自然湯)” engendered. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 73.4034; Zheng et al., *Yongchun zhouzhi* (Qianlong 52), 16.4a. What the local officials did not accept was the practice of mixed public bathing that the local people probably had been long accustomed to. They thus constructed public bathing pools and covered them with enclosed structures for men and women respectively, but never prohibited hot spring bathing.

Chapter 5

1. Lu, *Weinan wenji*, 24.12a.
2. Wu, *Song tejin zuochengxiang Xuguogong zouyi*, 2.132.
3. Jin Xiangfan explains the prosperity of religion in Fujian by considering a number of cultural and economic elements, including its long tradition of worshipping ghosts and deities, the arrival of new immigrants, the reclaiming of farmlands, peaceful social circumstance and subsequent economic growth. Jin, "Songdai cimiao zhengce de bianhua yu diyu shehui," 144–45.
4. Wang, *Yudi jisheng*, 128.3685.
5. *Ibid.*, 130.3733. According to the local gazetteers of Fujian, Zhangzhou was also called "the Buddhist kingdom." Shen, *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (Guangxu 4), 24.9a.
6. Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, 29.
7. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 37.16b.
8. For the history of the development of Daoism in Fujian, see He, *Fujian zongjiao wenhua*, 116–44; Xu, *Songdai Fujian shi xinbian*, 344–57.
9. Huang et al., *Bamin tongzhi*, 75.4121.
10. The statistic is based on Chinese scholar Xu Xiaowang's collection of related data from the *Song huiyao jigao*. Xu, *Songdai Fujian shi xinbian*, 378–82.
11. Liang, *Chunxi Sanshan zhi*, 9.17b.
12. Kang, *Liudu jijing*, 5.1a.
13. Mark Halperin examines the literati perspectives on Buddhism in Song China and reveals the strengthened ties between literati and clerical circles in comparison to the Tang. He investigates the Buddhism-related writings by influential Confucians who were devoted to classical revival, among whom a few came from Fujian, such as Yang Shi 楊時 (1053–1135), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235), and Huang Zhen 黃震 (1213–1280), and concludes "in narratives of the classical revival, then, Buddhism took part as *bête-noire* and as unacknowledged model." Halperin, *Out of the Cloister*, 7. For local elite's active involvement in Daoism in the Song, see Hymes, *Way and Byway*.
14. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 128.
15. Elite men's acceptance of women's religious practices was a common phenomenon throughout late imperial China. Francesca Bray argues, "There were periods when elite men became actively involved in Buddhism, or when an easy acquaintance with its philosophy and symbols was considered a sign of cultivation; at other times they kept a cool distance. But even then they did not forbid their mothers, wives, or daughters to practice their faith." See Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 135.
16. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 170.
17. *Ibid.*, 171.
18. Lu Jianrong investigates the evolution of epitaphs in China from the Han to the Song dynasty, and points out the publicity of epitaphs considerably

increased during the Tang-Song transition. The more famous authors were, the more widely their epitaphs were circulated. Lu, *Beiwei Tang Song siwang wenhua shi*, 49–50.

19. Halperin, “Domesticity and the Dharma,” 63.

20. Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” 359. Although Birge only addresses Buddhism in this statement, her conclusion applies to Song women’s religious beliefs in general.

21. Some women were said to ignore their womanly duties because of religious piety. For example, Lu You complained in one epitaph, “Recently the teachings of the inner quarters have become ridiculous. [Women] claim they are studying Buddhism, but they ignore the affairs of ancestor worship and properly hosting guests. They simply use private property (*si cai* 私財) to bribe [the Buddha] to gain what they want.” Lu, *Weinan wenjin*, 33.4b.

22. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 30.26b.

23. *Ibid.*, 30.10b–17b.

24. Yuan, *Dongtang ji*, 20.20b.

25. Li Gang’s father was deeply interested in Buddhism and befriended a number of prestigious Buddhist monks. Li Gang became a devoted Buddhist at an early age. Whether his mother believed in Buddhism was not recorded in her posthumous biography, but after she died, Li Gang lived close to her graveyard, “transcribed seven volumes of the Lotus Sutra, and put them in her coffin.” Considering the fact that Li prepared handwritten Buddhist texts to accompany his mother in the underground world, she very likely was also a Buddhist. See Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 143.1680.

26. Sixty years after his death, Zhu Xi eulogized the official worship of Li Gang in the Shaowu Command, and represented him as a moral model demonstrating lofty Confucian values. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 143.1775–76.

27. Li, *Minzhong lixue yuanyuan kao*, 7.12b–23b.

28. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 143.1361.

29. *Pāramitā* (*boluomi* in Chinese), translated as “six perfections,” “refers to the spiritual practice accomplished by a Bodhisattva.” The group of six *pāramitās* includes *dāna* (giving), *śīla* (ethical behavior), *kṣānti* (patience), *vīrya* (endeavor or effort), *dhyāna* (contemplation or meditation), and *prajñā* (wisdom). See Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 2.631–32.

30. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 170.1570. Li Gang only left two epitaphs for women. This commemorative text written for his mother-in-law, Ms. Huang, was one of them.

31. Wang, *Fuxi ji*, 24.20b.

32. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 170.1571.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Ebrey thoroughly studies Liu Kezhuang’s life experience and relationship with the women in his family. See Ebrey, “The Women in Liu Kezhuang’s Family,” 89–106.

35. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 157.6152.
36. Ibid.
37. Palm leaf manuscripts (*beiye jing* 貝葉經) refer to Buddhist sutras made out of dried palm leaves in Indian Buddhist tradition.
38. Pagoda trees originated in China. They were often planted in the grounds of Buddhist temples and close to pagodas.
39. *Qing* is a bowl-shaped instrument made of metal. It is widely used in Buddhist temples.
40. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 2.88.
41. Hsieh, "Images of Women in Ch'an Buddhist Literature," 178–79. Beata Grant also argues that there was "problem with women seeking the spiritual attainment traditionally reserved for men." "The gendered masculine retains its position of privilege, and the female state retains its implications of inferiority." Grant, "*Da zhangfu*," 180.
42. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 152.6010.
43. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 170.1571.
44. Qian, "Lienü versus Xianyuan," 72.
45. Halperin, "Domesticity and the Dharma," 69.
46. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuzi wenji*, 92.4477.
47. Halperin, "Domesticity and the Dharma," 69.
48. For the study of Li Shi, see Cai, *Songdai Sichuan lixue yanjiu*, 141–53.
49. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 206.126. For a complete quotation of the text, see Halperin, "Domesticity and the Dharma," 65.
50. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 206.126.
51. Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," 359.
52. Ibid.
53. Lu Jiuyuan, for example, criticized Zhu Xi for using Buddhist terms. Zhu Xi responded that his ideas were completely different from Buddhist ones in spite of the use of common terms. See Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, 200. Zhu Xi criticized Lu Jiuyuan's strong Buddhist inclinations, but the latter elaborated on the difference between his theory and Buddhism, and lambasted Buddhism for its selfishness. Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, 198.
54. Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 619.
55. Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, 30.
56. Hu, *Feiran ji*, 578–79.
57. Ibid., 409–13.
58. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 32.17b–18a.
59. I have discussed how some husbands viewed wives as friends in chapter 4.
60. Hsieh, "Images of Women in Ch'an Buddhist Literature," 179.
61. See Halperin, "Domesticity and the Dharma," 61–64.
62. Ibid., 56.

63. Other than meditation and chanting, low-cost ascetic practices such as fasting and vegetarianism were also widely practiced by Song women, regardless of their class identities. See Lü, “Women’s Ascetic Practices during the Song.”

64. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 170.1570.

65. Shinkaku, “Besson zakki (Miscellaneous Notes on Buddhist Images other than the Buddha),” in Takakusu Junjiro and Watanabe Kaigyoku eds., *Taishoshinshu daizokyo* (The Buddhist Canon Newly Compiled during the Taisho Era). Zuzobu 3.209b–c. Cited in Yu, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*, 244.

66. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 153.6014.

67. Zhu, *Fangyu shenglan*, 10.9a.

68. Huang, *Shangu ji*, waiji 8.18a.

69. ter Haar, “Buddhist-Inspired Options,” 101.

70. *Ibid.*, 129.

71. As Dieter Kuhn points out, “the followers of Pure Land practiced their religion by repeatedly invoking the name of Amitabha Buddha (*nianfo* 念佛), in the belief that the exercise would lead to the individual’s salvation.” See Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 109. This *nianfo* practice was popular among illiterate lay people in the Song.

72. Dieter Kuhn points out, “In Song times, literary (as opposed to spiritual) meditation based on systematized and formal techniques was promoted as a way to achieve spontaneity and realize enlightenment.” Thus, in comparison to illiterate women, literate and semiliterate ones devoted more resources to achieve the goals of meditation. See Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 109.

73. Yang, *Chengzhai ji*, 129.5a.

74. Huang, *Shangu ji*, waiji 8.18a.

75. Yang, *Chengzhai ji*, 132.9a.

76. They sometimes disseminated what they chanted. For example, Ms. Lin 林氏, “when she was thirty, realized the mundane world was not reliable, and [started to] chant Buddhist texts. She hoped the villagers would do good deeds, so she told karma stories to move them.” As the daughter of a scholar’s family, she was able to read and understand the religious texts. She not only read the books and recited them, but also transmitted the knowledge from the texts to an illiterate audience.

77. The story of Ms. Hui 惠氏, although not a Fujian local, provides us an example by which to understand literate women’s chanting practice in the Song period. Ms. Hui “had a deep understanding of the Lotus Sutra when she was an unpinning girl. When at leisure, she chanted [the Lotus Sutra] without missing or incorrectly reciting one word.” Yuan, *Dongtang ji*, 20.31a. Ms. Hui gained a good education in her natal family and was able to access and interpret Buddhist texts. The chanting of the Lotus Sutra exemplifies her high literacy and intelligence, which was worthy of record in the eyes of the epitaph writer.

The word “chanting” used in Ms. Hui’s biography really means “reciting” rather than “reading out aloud.” However, considering the unusualness of Ms. Hui’s case and elite women’s superior literacy in comparison to commoners, elite lay-women’s chanting practice was likely to be a combination of these two methods.

78. Levering, “Scripture and Its Reception,” 73.

79. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 151.5953.

80. Li Gang’s mother-in-law had profound knowledge of both Buddhism and Daoism. Huitzu Lü used the term “mixed cultivation” to refer to “the fact that some Song women mixed practices that originated in different religious traditions.” Lü, “Women’s Ascetic Practices,” 83.

81. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 91.4437.

82. Lucille Chia assumes that monasteries were involved in printing short sutras and religious pictures in Song Fujian although the extant evidence is rare. It seems they were part of the extensive local book market for the dissemination of religious texts and images. See Chia, *Printing for Profit*, 72–73.

83. For example, Ms. Hui, who was able to correctly recite the Lotus sutra at a young age, “drew paintings of Buddha and collected [Buddhist] sutras” after she married. She left a will at her sickbed: “After I die, put the Buddhist books that I chanted in my coffin.” Her life-long passion for Buddhist texts never faded. Very likely her will was respected despite the lack of surviving evidence. Yuan, *Dongtang ji*, 20.31b. Although religious books have not been discovered in Song Fujian tombs according to archaeological reports, textual sources suggest that some might have been buried together with tomb occupants in accordance with their religious preference.

84. For the archaeological report and research on the tomb of Sun Siniangzi, see Suzhou bowuguan, “Jiangyin Bei Song Ruichang xianjun Sun Siniangzi mu”; Zhu, “Guanyu Jiangyin Bei Song mu de muzhu Sun Siniangzi.”

85. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 1022.259.

86. Suzhou bowuguan, “Jiangyin Bei Song Ruichang xianjun Sun Siniangzi mu,” 29.

87. The notes are dated in the eleventh month of the first year of the Zhihe Reign (1054–1056).

88. For example, Cai Shen zhi’s 蔡誨之 mother, Ms. Xu 徐氏, was a recognized calligrapher in Jiangxi. She transcribed ninety-five volumes of Buddhist sutras. Chen, *Zhizhai xiansheng wenji*, 42.2b.

89. Many Song Buddhist and Daoist books were illustrated, which provided illiterate readers an alternative way to gain the information conveyed by written accounts. In Shih-shan Susan Huang’s study of early Buddhist illustrated prints in Hangzhou, she points out the popularity of illustrated Buddhist and Daoist printing, assesses “the correlation between texts and accompanying illustrations,” and states that “printed imagery served as a new medium for religion in the age of printing” in medieval China. See Huang, “Early Buddhist Illustrated

Prints in Hangzhou,” 135–65. The proliferation of printing and its low cost might also have contributed to the prevalence of printed religious texts among average lay people. Gregory and Ebrey, “The Religious and Historical Landscape,” 4.

90. Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 24.

91. Ibid.

92. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 37.16b–17a.

93. Ms. Hui, discussed earlier, was obsessed with Buddhist sutras, and “drew renderings of Buddha.” She was arguably a remarkable woman who had mastered all the skill associated with elites of her time, including reading, writing and painting. Yuan, *Dongtang ji*, 20.31a–b.

94. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 32.17b.

95. Griffith Foulk and Robert Sharf discuss a variety of meanings of *xiang* in early China. The term could mean “to resemble,” “portrait,” “figure,” “form,” “image,” “representation,” and so on. They agree with Edward Sharf, who prefers to render *xiang* as “effigy,” “simulacrum,” “analogue,” “counterpart,” “equivalent,” or “other-identity.” They argue that “the etymology of *xiang*, and the use of the term in texts . . . suggests the sense of mystery and creative power associated with the iconic reduplication of reality in ancient China.” I assume such an interpretation based on the theory of correspondences in early China also applies to the understanding of *xiang* in Song texts. See Foulk and Sharf, “On the Ritual Use of Chan Portraiture in Medieval China.”

96. Weidner, “Women in the History of Chinese Painting,” 21.

97. Yuhang Li studies the gender identity of embroiderers, and points out that most textual sources related to embroidered Buddhist icons were dedicated to women’s needlework, but the accounts of laymen and monks embroidering Buddhist images also survive from the Tang and Song periods. See Li’s dissertation, “Gendered Materialization: An Investigation of Women’s Artistic and Literary Reproductions of Guanyin in Later Imperial China,” 97–99.

98. Wang, *Luxi wenji*, 25.2b.

99. Bray, *Gender and Technology*, 237.

100. There are many examples of women’s embroidery of Buddhist icons in the Ming and Qing period. See Li, “Gendered Materialization.”

101. Song sources show women who embroidered came from various backgrounds. Nuns were occasionally engaged in the creation and trade of embroidery works. For example, Buddhist nuns sold embroideries side by side with accessories at the biggest market in the Northern Song capital. Meng, *Dongjing menghua lu*, 3.88.

102. Fong, “Female Hands: Embroidery as a Knowledge Field in Women’s Everyday Life in Late Imperial and Early Republican China,” 19.

103. Ibid.

104. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 140.1336.

105. Ibid., 140.1337.

106. Mann, “Women’s Work in the Ningbo Area, 1900–1936,” 260.

107. Li, "Gendered Materialization," 106.

108. Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 128. Ebrey does not articulate the interaction between upper-class women and Buddhist nuns, probably because of the deficiency of related sources in the Song. For an intensive discussion of this question in late imperial China, see Grant, "Chan Friends."

109. Li and Wang, *Li Gang quanji*, 170.1570.

110. Lü, "Women's Ascetic Practices," 79. She argues that "there are numerous cases of this in biographies and other sources, including the religious influence of mothers over both daughters and sons in their mature years, and including examples of ascetic behavior."

111. Chen, *Fuzhai xiansheng longtu Chengong wenji*, 21.26b.

112. *Ibid.*, 27a.

113. Yang, *Chengzhai ji*, 129.3b.

114. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 154.6050.

115. Huang, *Zhijiaoweng ji*, xia.61b.

116. Her name, *chongxu*, was derived from an ancient Daoist canon—the *Classics of Chongxu*.

117. Zhang, *Youhuan jiwen*, 8.67.

118. According to Huang Zhu's record, his mother's writings were ruined in a fire. He asked around and visited the recipients of his mother's poems to collect her works. Zhang, *Youhuan jiwen*, 8.67. This process of collecting his mother's literature suggests that he was familiar with his mother's social network.

119. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, jia 19.173.

120. Hsiao-wen Cheng investigates the intimate relationships between Daoist women in the Song and presents these as "queer space." Cheng, "Traveling Stories and Untold Desires," 186–91.

121. Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 198.

122. She explains the concept of "domesticated religiosity" in two aspects: first, "the home was literally the physical arena where one performed one's religious activities," second, "one could achieve religious sanctification by performing one's domestic obligations to the fullest degree." Yu, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*, 336–38.

123. von Glahn, *The Sinister Way*, 153.

124. Xie et al., *Yongfu xianzhi* (Wanli 40), 4.246.

125. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, zhiyi 10.872.

126. Zhang, *Kuoyi zhi*, 9.97.

127. For example, the Guanyin Bodhisattva was transformed to a feminine deity in middle-period China. Among her thirty-two incarnations, the white-robed Guanyin was promoted "as a goddess capable of granting children." See Yu, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*, 251, 253.

128. Zhao and Huang, *Xianxi zhi*, 3.16a.

129. Entertainment offered by temples might have played an important role in attracting women to go outside the *jia*. As Heng Chye Kiang states,

temple markets were “commonly held in market towns together with theatrical performances” in the Song dynasty. “Buddhist gatherings, Taoist gatherings, and gatherings at the altars of local spirits were typically held in conjunction with some periodic religious celebrations complete with fairs and popular entertainment.” Kiang, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats*, 165.

130. Shen, *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (Guangxu 4), 24.9a.

131. Wang, *Yongtai xianzhi* (Minguo 11), 12.8a. The woman may have viewed his shoes as sacred objects.

132. Liu and Guo, *Wushishan zhi*, 6.11b.

133. Xiang 廂 was a standard residential unit in Song cities.

134. Dean and Zheng, *Fujian zongjiao beming huibian: Quanzhou fu fence*, 23.

135. Lin, “Quanzhou kaiyuansi faxian Wudai shi jingchuang deng zhong-yao wenwu,” 24.

136. Comparing the calligraphy of the two inscriptions may help tell if the exterior one was also inscribed by Liang An. Unfortunately, the image of the statue inscription has not been publicized.

137. Liu, *Shaoxi ji*, 51.20b.

138. Li, *Zhuzi yulei*, 126.3037.

139. Wang, *Xinghua fu Putian xianzhi* (Qianlong 23), 31.1b.

140. Dou, *Song xingtong*, 12.198. See Bettine Birge on property rights in cut-off households in the Song dynasty. Birge, *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China*, 98.

141. Liang, *Chunxi Sanshan zhi*, 33.2a.

142. Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, zhiding 10.1050.

143. The value of ordination certificates has been intensively debated by Song historians. For example, Wang Shengduo from Mainland China views ordination certificates as valuable stocks that the Song government frequently used for the payment of transactions and labor services and as official rewards. In some cases, they were traded by merchants as profitable stocks and circulated like currencies. Wang, *Liang Song caizheng shi*, 348–49. For brief reviews of Chinese, Japanese, and English scholarship on ordination certificates, see Liu, “Hongchen langli nan xiuxing,” 580–81, and Liao, “Exploring Weal and Woe,” 378.

144. For example, Zhang Zizheng 張子正 prayed in a local temple for his sick wife. After she recovered, they went there together to select a convert and gave him an ordination certificate. See Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, zhiwu 4.1079.

145. Birge, “Chu Hsi and Women’s Education,” 359.

146. Halperin, “Domesticity and the Dharma,” 79.

147. Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 144.

148. Zhou, “The Hearth and the Temple,” 142–43.

149. Xu et al., *Fuzhou fuzhi* (Qianlong 19), 24.516.

150. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 320.10398.

151. Zeng and Liu, *Quan Song wen*, 110.95.

152. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 100.4864.

153. Actually Zhu Xi blamed Buddhist monks rather than laywomen when he talked about their inappropriate communication. Li, *Zhuji yulei*, 126.3037.

154. Song texts show that laywomen behaved in similar ways in many districts besides Fujian.

155. Chen, *Beixi daquan ji*, 43.14a.

156. Local religious processions were conducted outside Fujian as well. And elite men from other districts also expressed their concerns about such ceremonies labeled as “licentious worship” (*yinsi* 淫祀). See Wang, *Zhongguo jinshi minjian xinyang*, 126–29; Wang, *Zai guojia yu shehui zhijian*, 284–91; Lin, “‘Jiusu’ yu ‘xinfeng’: shilun Songdai wuxi xinyang de tese,” 31–38.

157. For the study of non-Buddhist/Daoist temples in Fujian from the Song to Qing, see Kojima, “Seishi to inshi: Fukken no chihōshi ni okeru kijutsu to ronri.”

158. Zhu Xi died in 1200. Chen Chun’s letter was composed when Zhao Rudang served as the prefect of Zhangzhou (1212–1213). See Li, *Song Fujianlu junshou nianbiao*, 173.

159. For Zhao Rudang’s biography, see Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 413.12393, 12397.

160. Chen, *Beixi daquan ji*, 43.14a–b.

161. Fang Quan was the Zhangzhou prefect from 1201 to 1203. See Li, *Song Fujianlu junshou nianbiao*, 171–72.

162. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 19.685.

163. For a complete list of Zhangzhou prefects from 1192 to 1211, see Li, *Song Fujianlu junshou nianbiao*, 170–73.

164. See, for example, He, “Qingchu shidafu yu funü”; and Goossaert, “Irrepressible Female Piety.”

165. Goossaert, “Irrepressible Female Piety,” 241.

166. The Song emperors did not ban women from visiting temples in general, as the later Ming-Qing rulers did. Emperor Zhezong 哲宗, at the request of a subject, once issued an edict regulating women’s temple visits in 1089. But it only prohibited women from visiting Chan Buddhist temples in the capital when they were not opened to the public. Li, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*, 424.10249–50. It did not see women’s presence in temples as inappropriate but intended to protect clerics in Chan Buddhist monasteries from being bothered by laywomen’s random visits.

167. Liao, “Visualizing the Afterlife,” 405.

168. Influential Confucian moralists such as Sima Guang, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi all left writings articulating funerary rites. On their combating of heterodoxy and vulgarity in funerals, see Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*, 68–101.

169. Although Zhu Xi’s *Family Rituals* became the orthodox and most popular family manual in Ming-Qing society, “at most levels of society in the

late-imperial period, the Buddhist tradition was the preferred, almost automatic, choice for mortuary rites,” as Timothy Brook has pointed out. Brook exemplifies the dominant influence of Buddhist funerals in Ming-Qing China with some sources from Fujian gazetteers. Brook, “Funerary Ritual and the Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China,” 477, 482.

170. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 38.8a–b.

171. In her study of cremation in Song China, Patricia Ebrey discusses Confucian objections to “rituals of contamination by Buddhist practices” in general. See Ebrey, “Cremation in Song China,” 157–59.

172. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 63.3123.

173. Ibid.

174. See Ibid., 63.3148.

175. Brook, “Funerary Ritual and the Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China,” 490.

176. It was normal for male writers in the Ming-Qing period to blame women for various religion-related problems. I would like to believe the contrast was an assumption that elite men made to deprive themselves of such troubles. It is reckless to conclude women were more religious than men on the basis of the biased sources left by male literati in late imperial China. Men were likewise actively engaged in religions in Chinese tradition, although their participation may have appeared in different ways from their female contemporaries. The religious practitioners that I have discussed in this chapter are mostly women, but it by no means suggests women in the Song were more likely to be Buddhist believers than men. It is partly because the surviving sources primarily reflect the views of elite men who had no favorable views of Buddhism.

177. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 89.2281.

178. Liao, “Visualizing the Afterlife,” 407. On “the psychological limits of the neo-Confucian prescriptions for funerary rites” in comparison to Buddhist funerals, see Brook, “Funerary Ritual and the Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China,” 491–92.

179. Lu You (1125–1210) stated the Zhu Xi had about one thousand disciples. Modern scholars have identified 467 of his students. See Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy*, 235. For the study of Zhu Xi’s disciples, see Ichiki, *Shu Ki monnin shūdan keisei no kenkyū*.

180. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 38.8b.

181. In spite of his personal objection to Buddhism, Huang Gan faithfully presented the Buddhist commitment of a number of laywomen when he composed their epitaphs. But such narratives are not available in Ms. Wu’s epitaph.

182. According to Yu Wenbao 俞文豹 (13th century), sons conducted Buddhist funerals for parents by default, and failing to do so counted as unfiliality. Yu, *Chuijian lu quanbian*, 4.125.

183. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 38.8b.

184. Confucian scholars' attempts at eliminating Buddhist or Daoist elements from funerals frequently encountered opposition from family and kins. For example, the son of Huang Luo 黄肇 (1151–1211), an exemplary official in Jiangxi, had to compromise before his clan members' united opposition and made his father's funeral a mixture of popular practices and classical rites. Yu, *Chuijian lu quanbian*, 4.125. Other than Huang Luo's example from Jiangxi, Ter Haar's research on lay religious life in the Lower Yangzi during the Song-Yuan period also shows that "the performance of Buddhist funerary rites was not limited to any social group; it was so common that strictly Confucian-minded literati felt the need to include an explicit prohibition on carrying out Buddhist funerary rites after their death." ter Haar, "Buddhist-Inspired Options," 118.

185. Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 154.6050.

186. Typical funerary inscriptions of Song women elaborate on their family backgrounds and personal virtuous deeds for the honor of the deceased's families. In addition to these common features, nongeneric information is available in many cases, providing us valuable sources and perspectives from which to study the male authors, who manipulated such writing opportunities to circulate their ideas among the assumed elite readers.

187. Huang, *Mianzhai ji*, 38.8b.

188. Yu Wenbao claimed that it was fine for men to conduct wives' and children's funerals in accordance with Confucian ritual, but sons would be condemned if they arranged parents' funerals in the same way. Yu, *Chuijian lu quanbian*, 4.125. In comparison to wives, mothers' domestic authority decided their religious inclinations were more likely to be respected in not only everyday practice (as I have discussed early in the chapter) but also funeral management.

189. For a concrete example in Fujian, see He, *Mingdai shishen yu tongsu wenhua*, 197–202.

Chapter 6

1. Wu Hung articulates the prolonged and complicated process of building an elite tomb and points out the construction of a tomb relies on the collaboration between "patrons, builders, and artisans." Wu, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 8–9.

2. *Ibid.*, 9.

3. de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 246.

4. Gideon Shelach argues that "there are good reasons for using mortuary data to address gender configurations: only in such data can we correlate the sex of an individual with a set of material attributes such as the artifacts buried with him or her, the size of the grave, and remains of ceremonial treatments; on the other hand, as many have pointed out, because graves are the result of a ceremonial activity, the data recovered from their excavation are not a direct

reflection of the sociopolitical and economic position held by the deceased during his or her lifetime.” He suggests that “we must place the mortuary data in a larger archaeological context and test our conclusions with the analysis of other dimensions of the archaeological data.” See Shelach, “Marxist and Post-Marxist Paradigms for the Neolithic,” 25–26.

5. See Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xin Zhongguo de kaogu shouhuo*, 104–10; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xin zhongguo de kaogu faxian he yanjiu*, 595–650; Wenwu chubanshe, *Xin Zhongguo kaogu wushinian*, 163–230; and Zou, Wu, and Gu, *Jiangsu kaogu wushinian*, 350–73.

6. Generally speaking, Fujian tombs in the Song can be divided into brick tombs with an arched brick vault (*quanding zhuanishi mu* 券頂磚室墓), brick tombs with a flat vault of stone slabs (*zhuanishi shiding mu* 磚室石頂墓), brick-stone combination tombs (*zhuanishi hunzhu mu* 磚石混築墓), and stone chamber tombs (*shishi mu* 石室墓). See Qin, *Song Yuan Ming kaogu*, 137–62.

7. Ibid.

8. The archaeological reports of those Fujian Song tombs excavated after the 1980s are usually published in national and local archaeological journals; however, many statements of those discovered from 1950s to 1970s did not get published on time. Thanks to the support of Fujian provincial museum’s leaders, I was admitted to their special archive center, and encountered a number of precious early archaeological reports. These discolored paper, beautiful handwritings, and detailed records not only present early archaeologists’ efforts, but also broaden my knowledge of Fujian Song tombs.

9. According to online news, a double-chamber tomb with a passage was excavated in Ningde county (Fuzhou district) in 2012. Since no official archaeological reports have been published yet, I do not include it in Table 6.1.

10. The framework of data provided by this collection is incomplete since some of these tombs are undated, in which case their value is restricted to problems of tomb typology.

11. Fujian is a mountainous region, and old tombs are normally located in the mountains and thus not easily found. Modern archaeologists’ work is typically unplanned passive salvage. They use professional knowledge to explore tombs that are accidentally excavated by local people in modern architectural and civil engineering projects. For example, among the fifty tombs discovered in Nanjianzhou, twenty-one were excavated in 2003 because of the construction of a national highway. Based on the circumstances under which archaeological excavation occurs in modern Fujian, these data may only indicate the two areas’ relative economic development in contemporary China.

12. In decoding tombs of the Song elite, Dieter Kuhn argues that “scholar-officials of Song times followed the traditional line of understanding for plain burials,” and “as a rule they built simple coffin chambers designed for the burial of one person as single coffin chamber tombs.” However, based on Chinese archaeologists’ relatively comprehensive regional analysis, his statements roughly

conform only to North China's situation. See Kuhn, "Decoding Tombs of the Song Elite," 20.

13. Kong, *Maoshi zhengyi*, 4.65. Following the citation of the classical text from the *Book of Songs*, Kong elaborated on these lines in his commentary: "[according to ritual] a couple stays in separate rooms while alive, so that they are differentiated into inner and outer, but when dead, their spirits merge into one [and may be buried together]."

14. For the transformation of joint-burial tombs, see Yūko and Ling, "Zhongguo gudai de fuqi hezang mu," 103–110; Jiang, "Handai tongfen yixue fuqi hezang mu qianyi," 82–88; and Chen, "Tangdai de yifu duoqi hezang yu fuqi guanxi," 282–88.

15. The change of burial styles in Fujian from the Northern Song to the Southern Song period was not unique local phenomenon. Deng Xiaonan's extensive investigation of the archaeological excavations of Song tombs shows double-chamber tombs for couples became increasingly prevalent in south China after the middle Northern Song period, especially in the Southern Song time. See Deng, "Chutu cailiao yu Tang Song nüxing yanjiu," 312.

16. Sima, *Sima shi shuyi*, 7.78.

17. Zhu Xi, in the *Family Rituals*, cited Sima Guang and promoted the two tomb patterns. However, as a ritual specialist who carefully investigated the burial practices in Fujian, he noticed the differences of geographic conditions between the north (where Sima Guang lived) and Fujian (where Zhu Xi lived). One of his disciples talked about it was practically and ritually correct to bury a coffin deeply to prevent grave robbing. Zhu Xi advocated the similar idea in his ritual manual, which he targeted at a general audience without regional discrimination. However, in his personal conversation with this disciple, he stated, "No. Water [prevents] deep burial. I ever saw the tumulus in Xinghua, Zhangzhou, and Quanzhou were very high. I asked [local people], and was told, 'Coffins float on the ground. Even those buried deeply only had a half beneath the ground, and another half above the ground. Therefore tumulus must be high.' I later saw [some people] in Fuzhou dug out coffins and relocated them. Coffins buried relatively deeply all came out of water. Then I know shallow burials in Xinghua, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou were conducted for the sake of waterproofing. Soil in the North is thick and solid, so it does not matter to bury deeply. How could [Fujian] be the same as [the north]?" Li, *Zhuxi yulei*, 89.2286–87. The tomb with an underground corridor leading to the cave-room or dirt room consumes large space and demands deep burial, which does not fit the underground geographic conditions that Zhu Xi observed in east Fujian. In contrast to the east coast area, the west of Fujian is mountainous, which makes deep burial infeasible too.

18. Kuhn, "Decoding Tombs," 92.

19. Kong, *Li ji zhengyi*, 10.89.

20. Ibid.

21. According to Patricia Ebrey's and Dieter Kuhn's study, although there are a number of short descriptions of Song burial ritual in other works, such as the *Rites of the Kaiyuan Period* (*Da Tang Kaiyuan li* 大唐開元禮), *New Ceremonies for the Five Rites of the Zhenghe Period* (*Zhenghe wuli xinyi* 政和五禮新儀), and *The Classic of the Secrets of Burials of the Original Sepulchers of the Great Han* (*Da Han yuanling mizangjing* 大漢原陵秘葬經), they are not as precise as the descriptions by Sima Guang and Zhu Xi. These two works are "based on the experience of the authors, and unparalleled in Song times." See Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*, 107; Kuhn, "Decoding Tombs," 21–23.

22. See Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, 23–24.

23. Patricia Ebrey elaborates on Zhu Xi's motivation of compiling an appropriate ritual manual for commoners to replace Sima Guang's difficult *Sima shi shuyi* in the introduction of her translation of the *Jia li*. See Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*.

24. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 63.3144–45.

25. Su, *Dongpo zhilin*, 7.31. Translation partly based upon Stahl, "Su Shi's Orthodox Burials," 161–62.

26. Su, *Dongpo zhilin*, 7.31.

27. Stahl, "Su Shih's Orthodox Burials," 163.

28. Song double-chamber tombs with interconnected passages have also been found in other south China areas, such as Guizhou 貴州, Hubei 湖北, Jiangxi 江西, Guangzhou 廣州, and Zhejiang 浙江. According to Helga Stahl, "a similar but simplified tradition of that Sichuanese tomb type was followed in the lower Yangzi region, especially in Fujian." *Ibid.*

29. In the thirty-six Song Fujian double-chamber tombs of Table 6.1, ten tombs have passages, except for some whose inner structure has been disturbed and passages could not be identified.

30. Among the thirty-six double-chamber tombs, ten have passageways, and twenty do not. The conditions of the remaining six are unknown. In addition, all the four three-chamber tombs have no passageways.

31. Wang, *Zang du*, 6a.

32. Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*, 121–22.

33. In fact, in Fujian Song tombs, those that are well protected are all examples of Zhu Xi's burial method, although their sealing materials vary slightly. Archaeological excavations have demonstrated that double-chamber tombs without connecting passageways are better preserved than those with them.

34. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 63.3145–46.

35. For the ritual and symbolic significance of gender-related left-right hierarchy, see Peng, *Gudai lisu zuoyou zhibian yanjiu*, 161–210.

36. Although Peng Meiling argues the "male/left, female/right" conception was prevalent in Chinese tradition, she notices the considerable existence of "male/right, female/left" evidence in both ritual manuals and practice. *Ibid.*

37. Li, *Zhuji Yulei*, 89.2286.

38. Zhu Xi appreciated Li Tangzi's scholarship and invited him to tutor students at government schools when Zhu was a local magistrate in Zhangzhou.

39. See note 34.

40. For the contradictory opinions on husband's and wife's positions in a tomb in Ming burial articles, see Peng, *Gudai lisu zuoyou zhibian yanjiu*, 195–96.

41. Among these eleven tombs, the relative positions of couples can be determined through the analysis of original drawings of the tomb layout in two (Tombs 1 and 6). The first is “male/left, female/right” type, while the second is just the opposite. Couples' relative positions in the other nine tombs are stated in formal archaeological reports. Six of them (Tombs 10, 13, 21, 32, 37, 71) are the “male/left, female/right” type. The other three (Tombs 22, 29, 44), on the other hand, are “male/right, female/left” type. However, for Tomb 44, when comparing the archeological report to the drawing of the tomb's layout, I find that its so-called “male/right, female/left” arrangement is construed from the archaeological professional's perspective when facing the corpses. In the primary texts, however, male and female's relative positions are discussed from the protagonists' own viewpoints, and a standard archaeological report is supposed to describe that in the same way. In view of this fault in Tomb 44's archaeological report and the possibility that it is duplicated in other reports, it is hard to be sure how many exactly of the nine double-chamber tombs belong to the “male/left, female/right” or “male/right, female/left” type respectively.

42. Geomancy was widely practiced in Fujian during the Song era. In the most famous Song collection of occult anecdotes, *Yi jian zhi* 夷堅志, many stories describe Fujian elite's active involvement in *fengshui* 風水 practices. For example, Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 (1113–1186), a prime minister in the early Southern Song, purchased a tomb land for his father from a merchant who accepted a geomancer's advice. See Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, zhiwu 2.1065. A geomancer predicted Ye Yong's 葉顒 (1100–1167) promotion to the position of prime minister after he saw the location of the ancestor hall of the Ye family, and thus was welcomed by zealous local elite. See Hong, *Yi jian zhi*, zhiwu 2.1064. In Chen Jinguo's 陳進國 dissertation, he contextualized the study of Song geomancy in the local history of Fujian, elaborated on the development of two Fujian *fengshui* schools, and explored their contributions to the construction of an integrated local culture in Song Fujian. See Chen, “Shisheng shisi: Fengshui yu Fujian shehui wenhua bianqian.” The fluidity of *qi* and the appropriate position of tombs were two major concerns in the field of geomancy. Some people might have constructed the passageways or arranged the left/right locations of a couple in accordance with geomantic considerations. However, I have not found any arguments discussing such topics in the extant Song geomantic manuals so far. These questions await further research.

43. From Table 6.1, we know that the five three-chamber tombs excavated so far (Tombs 3, 4, 8, 11, and 17) are all located in the Fuzhou area. Although Tomb 4 is a combination of parents and a child, the other four are all

occupied by one husband and two wives. Tomb 4 is a special case among these three-chamber tombs, since the child died at a young age while still under the parents' protection and was put between the parents' bodies in the grave pit.

44. Tombs 8 and 11 have epitaphs, which confirm the husband-wife relationship between the tomb occupants. Jin Huihan's study of Ming tombs in Jiangnan district shows husbands were sometimes buried with wives as well as concubines. But there have been no textual or material sources evidencing the existence of husband/concubine joint burial in the Tang and Song period. Jin, "Qing yu de." I therefore assume Tombs 3 and 17 accommodate husbands and wives, in spite of their unknown identities.

45. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 62.3101. A complete version of Zhang Zai's argument is available in Wei, *Li ji jishuo*, 67.20b–21a.

46. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 62.3102.

47. Ibid.

48. Jin Huihan investigates the complexity of Tang joint burial by focusing on the tombs excavated in the two capitals of the Tang. In the western capital Chang'an, joint burial was mostly for a husband and his first wife while the second wife was buried in a separate tomb close by. In contrast, joint burial for one husband and two wives was prevalent in the eastern capital Luoyang. The former reflected great clans' insistence on the ancient tradition of one husband/one wife pattern, and the latter resulted from the changing social circumstance and subsequent modification of old rituals. Jin, "Youzou lifa de bianyuan."

49. Zhu and Chen, *Zhuji wenji*, 62.3102.

50. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 26.14b.

51. The arrangement of joint burial for husband and wife may occasionally have been conducted by a second wife instead of descended. Chen Joshui's study of joint burial in the Tang shows some second wives arranged joint burial for their husbands and first wives while having their own tombs built elsewhere. Chen interprets this unusual practice as the exertion of the second wives' agency. Chen, "Tangdai de yifu duoqi hezang yu fuqi guanxi," 288–96. Although I have not encountered similar sources in the Song, I guess Chen's discovery may also apply to some Song women.

52. In *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, Wu Hung translates the Chinese word *mingqi* into the English term "spirit article." He investigates ancient Confucian classics and concludes that "generally speaking, *mingqi* are portable tomb furnishings, mainly objects and figurines, that are especially designed and produced for the dead." In ancient China, *mingqi* was "an independent category of objects within a larger assemblage of tomb furnishings; the other two categories are *shengqi* (lived objects) and *jiqi* (sacrificial vessels), both of which were goods that had originally belonged to a tomb occupant." See Wu, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 87–88. However, funerary accessories, no matter whether they were produced for the dead or ever used by the dead, were indistinguishably called *mingqi* in many Song texts. It seems that in some cases Song people viewed

funerary accessories recontextualized in a tomb as articles for the afterlife without any discrimination. I assume that the concept of *mingqi* had been generalized in some discourses in middle-period China. Therefore, in my discussion of Song tombs, *mingqi* is no longer a specific category of objects as it originally was, but refers to all funerary accessories buried underground for the tomb occupants.

53. See Arnold and Wicker, *Gender and the Archaeology of Death*, xv; de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings*, 225.

54. Arnold and Wicker, *Gender and the Archaeology of Death*, xv.

55. The exploration of women's artistic works in late imperial China has convinced me that there is neither "male style" nor "female style" in visual arts. The exhaustive comparative analysis of pictorial sources, such as Weidner, *Flowering in the Shadows*, makes clear that men and women essentially shared and practiced the same artistic tradition. Paintings and calligraphy cannot be reliably attributed to men or women through examination of motif, technique, and pattern.

56. Christian de Pee argues that "the material remains of joint burial are merely a different kind of trace of historical practice." "The mute simultaneity and the silent ambiguity of architecture, stone carvings, murals, grave goods, and human remains allow a juxtaposition of incompatible notions of time, space, bodies, and writing that the determinate text precludes." See de Pee, *The Writings of Weddings*, 19. Therefore, the artifacts of *mingqi*, the most typical grave goods in joint burials, superior to textual documents, provide us a valuable perspective to understand gender and space.

57. See Zhang, "Jiangxi xinyushi faxian Nan Song mu," 25.

58. I went to Fujian in the summers of 2005 and 2006 and established personal communications with archaeologists who had been working in Fujian for dozens of years.

59. It is easy to tell a tomb occupant's sex from his or her skeleton or clothing. However, in most cases, these materials became decomposed before the tomb was excavated.

60. Tomb 13 exhibited in Fuzhou City Museum is also famous for its collection of clothing. However, its collection is still much less than that in Huang Sheng's tomb. Furthermore, in Tomb 13, the husband's and wife's clothing collections approximately equal each other in quantity.

61. Song, *Jingwen ji*, 48.5a.

62. Some Song women actually wrote will essays as Song Qi did, but their works were not preserved. For example, when Ms. Wang realized she was ready to die, she "refused to take medicine, and asked for brush pen to write down a will essay." See Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 163.6352.

63. Hong, *Panzhou wenji*, 77.509.

64. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 26.15b.

65. Fan, *Taishi Fangong wenji*, 45.11b.

66. Liu, *Mantang wenji*, 35.16a.

67. Ye, *Shuixin xiansheng wenji*, 22.592.

68. In the epitaph for Ms. Zhao, Liu Kezhuang praised her since she said that she did not want her funeral to be a burden for her children, and so she arranged for tomb construction and funerary accessories by herself. See Liu and Xin, *Liu Kezhuang ji jianjiao*, 158.6201.

69. Although no textual sources prove Huang Sheng used these objects, their appearance as *mingqi* in her tomb chamber indicates they were her personal belongings. Furthermore, some of them have signs of being used.

70. The custom of burying lived objects that originally belonged to a tomb occupant as funerary accessories already existed in ancient China. The three categories of funerary accessories (note 52), and their varied features are recorded in an early Confucian canon—*Ceremonies and Rites* (*Yi li* 儀禮). Wu, “Mingqi de lilun he shijian,” 71–81.

71. Song women’s use of stationery is attested by some visual sources. For example, a number of murals depict the female tomb occupant’s daily life in a Northern Song tomb excavated in Henan. One panel shows her reading books and writing calligraphy. Desk, chair, book, brush and inkstone are basic props that constitute a study-like setting. Zhengzhoushi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Henan Xinmishi Pingmo Songdai bihuamu,” 26–32. For English scholarship, see Lee, *Empresses, Art, and Agency in Song Dynasty China*, 107–09.

72. Henan sheng wenwuju wenwu gongzuo dui, “Henan Fangcheng Yandianzhuangcun Songmu,” 75–76.

73. Hefei shi wenwu guanlichu, “Hefei Bei Song Ma Shaoting fuqi hezangmu,” 26–38.

74. I have not found primary sources that address the local *mingqi* markets in Fujian. But two books that record the prosperity of two Song capitals reveal the existence of *mingqi* markets (professional producers and vendors) in the cities, which I assume applies generally to urban centers and market towns in Song society. See Meng, *Dongjing Menghua lu*, 8.211; Wu, *Meng liang lu*, 13.112.

75. See note 19 in the Introduction.

76. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 89.2208–209.

77. Jennifer Purtle’s research on Youxi tomb murals leads her to conclude that “wealth and the culture of Filial Piety advocated by neo-Confucian teachings, including those that preceded Zhu Xi’s formulation of neo-Confucianism, produced a unique artistic legacy: a mode of neo-Confucian tomb mural painting represented by several dozen Song dynasty tombs decorated with murals or combined mural and/or sculptural programs with programmatic decoration featuring paragons of filial piety.” Purtle, “The Production of Painting,” 163. I doubt the existence of this so-called “mode of neo-Confucian tomb mural painting.” The paragons of filial piety are merely one sort of motif available in some Youxi tombs. As a long-existing mural motif related to traditional Confucian value, they were also prevalent in contemporary tombs in North China, and were by no means a local subject. Although Zhu Xi and his disciples may have been

intellectually influential in Youxi, there have been no direct evidence suggesting their impact on mural motifs.

78. According to an art historian, Jennifer Purtle's study, although Song Youxi mural tombs vary in "size, structure, and decorative media," they are uniform in their "iconographic program." "The tombs are painted differently, in slightly varying styles and widely varying qualities of figure painting; some tombs integrate painting and sculpture in their decorative programs." "Differences in styles and modes of representation found in the Song tombs of Youxi County make the establishment of a chronology based on style impossible." "It is not known what forces shaped production, for example, whether or not stylistic variations are the result of production by different artisans and workshops, or the result of different levels of economic outlay, or result from the personal tastes of the patrons." See Purtle, "The Production of Painting," 164. Jennifer Purtle lists several reasons that may have caused the stylistic variations in Song Youxi tomb murals. Actually gender, which is not included in her consideration, could also be an element influencing the production. However, these reasons are merely assumptions.

79. Xu Yun should be the name of the male tomb occupant. *Yihai* is the year when he died or was buried, which could be any of the six *yihai* years throughout the Song dynasty—975, 1035, 1095, 1155, 1215, and 1275.

80. Archaeological reports have shown that there are several single mural tombs such as Tomb 30 constructed in this style in Youxi County.

81. The upper part of the bedroom mural in Tomb 32 is not elaborated in its archaeological report. However, similar bedroom murals in other Youxi tombs reveal that there are auspicious signs like sun, moon, and flying birds painted above the bed roof (Tombs 25 and 33). Furthermore, the two maidservants standing in front of the bed are replaced by auspicious animals like cocks, dogs (Tomb 30), and tortoises (Tomb 41).

82. This bedroom mural on the hind wall is popular in Song Fujian mural tombs. Although some hind wall murals were badly damaged, the bedroom murals in Tombs 25 (Youxi), 30 (Youxi), 32 (Youxi), and 41 (Nanping) are specifically recorded in their archaeological reports. The bedroom mural in Tomb 30 is one of the best preserved among these examples. See Figure 6.7.

83. In the two well-preserved mural tombs (Tombs 30 and 32), the bedrooms depicted in the husband's and wife's chambers are almost identical except for a few minor differences. No gender hints are discernable. For the drawings of the two beds and accessories in Tomb 32, see Yang, "Shilun Youxi Songmu bihua fanyingchude yixie wenti jiqi yishu tese," 18–19.

84. Ms. Liu, a Quanzhou elite's daughter, was buried in Sichuan with her husband in early Southern Song period. In her tomb chamber, there are two large pieces of sculptural relief describing her entertainment in public space. In one of them, two groups of guards and attendances are leading a sedan forward. In the other one, ten attendants are preparing food and drink in the open air

with the utensils that they carried. As these visual materials indicate, women enjoyed nondomestic leisure as men did in the Song period; however, their hidden images in the covered sedan reveal that their outside activities were subjected to some restrictions. See Sichuan sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Nan Song Yu Gongzhu fufu hezangmu," 383–402.

85. Riding, reading and writing appeared as themes representing women's daily life in Song tomb murals or sculptures respectively although such cases are rare. For example, in a middle Southern Song tomb in Sichuan Zhaohua, there is a piece of sculptural relief depicting a woman riding a donkey and followed by an attendant holding an umbrella. See Shen and Chen, "Sichuan Zhaohuaxian Quhuixiang de Songmu shike," 52–54. In a late Northern Song tomb in Henan Xinmi, there are two murals depicting women who read and write at desk and are attended by maidservants in the inner chambers. See Zhengzhou shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Henan Xinmishi Pingmo Songdai bihuamu," 26–32.

86. Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 7.

Epilogue

1. For the decrease of women's property rights from Song to Ming, see Birge, "*Women and Confucianism from Song to Ming*."

2. In the early fourteenth century, the Yuan government adopted Zhu Xi's comments on Four Books (four ancient Confucian canons) as the standard curriculum for civil service examination candidates. The Ming and the subsequent Qing governments continued the policy, which came to an end in the early twentieth century.

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In *Crossing the Gate*, Man Xu examines the lives of women in the Chinese province of Fujian during the Song dynasty. Tracking women's life experience across class lines, outside as well as inside the domestic realm, Xu challenges the accepted wisdom about women and gender roles in medieval China. She contextualizes women in a much broader physical space and social network, investigating the gaps between ideals and reality and examining women's own agency in gender construction. She argues that women's autonomy and mobility, conventionally attributed to Ming-Qing women of late imperial China, can be traced to the Song era. This thorough study of Song women's life experience connects women to the great political, economic, and social transitions of the time, and sheds light on the so-called "Song-Yuan-Ming transition" from the perspective of gender studies. By putting women at the center of analysis and by focusing on the local and the quotidian, *Crossing the Gate* offers a new and nuanced picture of the Song Confucian revival.

MAN XU is Assistant Professor of History at Tufts University.

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